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The truth about
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THE TRUTH ABOUT JUTLAND

THE TRUTH ABOUT JUTLAND

By REAR-ADMIRAL J. E. T. HARPER
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LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

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INTRODUCTION

I WANT to make it quite clear that this is *not* the so-called *Harper Record*, so frequently demanded in the House of Commons. The Official Record of the Battle of Jutland, which I was originally directed, by Admiral-of-the-Fleet Lord Wester Wemyss, to prepare and which was completed in October 1919,[1] was simply a plain, straightforward narrative of the sequence of events, together with track charts showing the movements of every ship present on both sides. It was, in fact, "the truth about Jutland", from start to finish, in the form of an unvarnished statement based solely on documentary evidence and free from comment or criticism. By Lord Wester Wemyss' direction, all statements made in the Record were to have been in accordance with evidence obtainable from Official documents, and no oral evidence was to be accepted. These instructions were faithfully followed by me, as stated by Lord Wester Wemyss in a letter to the Press published on 16th December 1920.

[1] House of Commons, 29th October 1919.

Had the Record been published, in its original form, it would have been of no great interest to the reader looking for something sensational, but it would have prevented the flood of misconceptions and misrepresentations with which the public has been misled for some seven years past. It would also have prevented the controversy, largely of a personal nature, so virulently waged in the Press.

On the other hand, it is a very good thing that in its ultimate form it never did see the light of day. The whole story of the deletions, alterations and additions—or in Parliamentary language "the necessary revision of the material" [1]—demanded by those in authority cannot be told in these pages. The vicissitudes which the original Record underwent must, however, be patent to anyone who followed the series of tortuous manœuvres and official prevarications in Parliament whenever it was asked for. In this connection a somewhat lengthy précis of a very few of the many Answers on the subject, in chronological order, will now be given. Space does not permit of quoting these in full.[2]

[1] House of Commons, 11th April 1923.

[2] The words "report", "narrative" and "record" were used indiscriminately when referring to my Official Record. It was a "record" and not a report, which latter word implies comment.

The italics are mine.

1919.

19th March. "Steps are already being taken to draw up a narrative showing the actual sequence of events. . . ." The question of *publication* "*will be considered*".

26th March. "Captain J. E. T. Harper has been attached to the War Staff for the purpose." . . . *Publication* "*will be considered*".

9th July. It is anticipated that Captain Harper's investigation will be completed at "end of September and *publication will be considered*".

25th July. ". . . the Official Record is now being compiled. . . ."

A DEFINITE PROMISE

29th October. "No 'inquiry' has been held, nor is one in contemplation. A narrative of events *has been completed* and *will be published when printed.*"

3rd December. "It is hoped to *publish shortly.*"

1920.

18th February. "The Official narrative of the Battle of Jutland will, I hope, be

published shortly. . . ." A report by Admiral Scheer *will be published* " *as an appendix to the Official narrative.* This report *has been utilized* to check the information available from our own records. . . ."

14th April. " . . . technicalities connected with production make it improbable that *publication can take place in much less than 3 months from now.*"

23rd June. " Regret date (of publication) cannot be given. Difficulties arising, among other things, from the *provision of paper for the charts, are stated to be likely to cause delay. . . .*"

4th August. " Fresh evidence has recently come to light which must be considered before the Official Report, *which had almost reached completion,*[1] can be published . . . shall certainly ensure that he (Lord Jellicoe) will see the final form before publication."

THE PROMISE IS NOW RESCINDED

27th October. " *It is not now proposed to publish an Official account* . . . any

[1] It will be noted that the Record has now " almost reached completion ", whereas on 29th October 1919 it had " been completed ".

record based on *British official evidence only* would inevitably present a one-sided version. . . . Moreover, Sir Julian Corbett's 'Naval History of the War' . . . includes Jutland, is likely to be published in the course of next year, and the *publishers have made representations that they would have strong reason to complain* of the simultaneous publication by the Admiralty of any such narrative. However, all the material prepared by the Admiralty will be placed at Sir Julian Corbett's disposal. . . ." ". . . both gallant Admirals (Jellicoe and Beatty) *have seen the report.*"

1st November. The Prime Minister would not promise that the Official Record would be included in the 'Naval History of the War' as it stands, *without any amendment, alteration, or omissions.* His reasons for the Admiralty having gone back on their decisions to publish was, that it was a "highly controversial topic" and possibly not "desirable that there should be a separate account". He further stated that the publishers had "*absolutely no right*" *to object to the Official publication of a separate Admiralty account.*

4th November. The Prime Minister stated: "In view of the general wish expressed on Monday for the immediate publication of documents relating to the Battle of Jutland, a Parliamentary Paper will be issued at an early date containing *all these documents* whether reports, despatches or signals."

This reply was taken to mean that my Official Record would be published, as evidenced by a letter from Viscount Curzon published in *The Times* on 5th November 1920, in which he said: "I cannot help writing these few lines with reference to the announcement by the Prime Minister that the Official Report of the Battle of Jutland is to be published. . . . The non-publication of this Report represented the worst possible results of the policy of Hush. . . . I maintain that the country has a right to know the truth. . . ."

Further evidence as to the accepted meaning of the Prime Minister's promise is contained in a Question and Answer in the House of Commons on:

15th November. In reply to the question: "When the *Official Record of the Battle of Jutland will be published*?" it was

stated: "It is hoped that *publication will be possible within a month.*"

Several other questions were asked during November 1920, the replies to which at length made it clear to the House that the promised publication was not the Official Record. This led to the following Answers being given in reply to further demands for that Record:

22nd November. "The reason for not publishing Captain Harper's summary of events was . . . that a record based on *British Official evidence only* would inevitably present a one-sided version. . . ."

1st December. ". . . Captain Harper's diagrams . . . will not be included."

8th December. Viscount Curzon pressed for a reconsideration of the decision not to publish the "Harper diagrams", but he was informed that: "Facts were asked for and the facts at the disposal of the Admiralty . . . will be published."

Rear-Admiral Adair then remarked that "the Official despatches will be so much Greek to the general public and to most of the Members of this House, and that it is only by such a report as Captain Harper's that

anything intelligible can be made out of them." He was then told that " . . . that was the *attitude the Admiralty took up in the first instance*, but the demand of the House for immediate publication of the Official documents was granted by the Prime Minister. . . . The Admiralty was rather turned down as to the procedure which they proposed to take."

The despatches, signals and other documents referring to the battle were, in December 1920, published as a Blue Book (*Battle of Jutland. Official Despatches with Appendices.* Cmd. 1068). This publication not unnaturally led to several more questions being asked in the House and to objections in the Press, because the issue of this mass of undigested documents only confused public opinion more than ever. Further requests were made in the House of Commons on 23rd December 1920, 11th April 1923, 27th February 1925 and 14th March 1927, and in the House of Lords on 8th March 1921, for the publication of the Official Record and the charts which accompanied it; but all requests were met with a refusal. On 11th April 1923, in reply to a Question, it was stated that the Record was " *only completed some months after he* (Lord Wester Wemyss) *had left the Board.* By the time it was completed further informa-

tion had become accessible *which necessitated revision of the material*".

The nation and the Press have, not unnaturally, sensed a "mystery" about Jutland. Actually there is not, and never has been, any mystery about the details of the battle, but the public has every reason to be suspicious and dissatisfied with the Admiralty's attitude towards the subject.

The present small work is not intended to be a comprehensive account of the battle. Such an account is to be found in the *Official History of the War—Naval Operations—Vol. III.* Its author, that gifted and honest historian, the late Sir Julian Corbett, had all the secret and other records, including the *Harper Record*, at his disposal,[1] and all the essential facts are truly and comprehensively stated in his account; but, like all Official publications, any comments it contains are explanatory and not critical. It is very curious, however, that even this straightforward account, published under the auspices of the Committee of Imperial Defence, at the public expense, should have been specifically repudiated by the Board of Admiralty in a note on the fly-leaf.

In the chapters which follow I have only attempted to outline the salient features of

[1] House of Commons, 15th December 1920.

the Battle of Jutland, and in doing so I have made use of no information which is not available to the public; but it has been my endeavour to show just where, and how, the public has been so badly misled on many important points. For sake of brevity the full titles of the Admirals mentioned are, in most cases, omitted, and they are alluded to, with all respect, by their surnames only.

The Official Record, prepared under my supervision, would not have dotted the " i's " and crossed the " t's " of its narrative as I have been able to do, to a certain extent, herein. My readers may also be able to draw their own conclusions as to the real reasons why that Record was not published.

It only remains to recall that Admiral-of-the-Fleet Lord Wester Wemyss was the First Sea Lord who originally issued the orders for an Official Record of Jutland to be prepared, in a form in which it could be published should such a demand arise. He perused it on its completion and, on 16th December 1920, wrote to the Press as follows:

" . . . The report was only finished just before I left the Admiralty. . . . I regret that the Admiralty should withhold from the public a paper which was designed for their information, and which would materially have

assisted them in forming an opinion upon a somewhat involved subject."

Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman, another one-time First Sea Lord, wrote to *The Times* on 3rd January 1921 referring to Lord Wester Wemyss' letter. He said: "Lord Jellicoe has asked no less strongly, and still asks, that it should be published. What is standing in the way? As a former First Sea Lord, may I add my voice to that of Lord Wester Wemyss and Lord Jellicoe, in the interests of the Service . . ."

We have, therefore, three ex-First Sea Lords, two of whom, Lord Wester Wemyss and Lord Jellicoe, had seen the Record, and all of whom desired the publication of all the facts connected with the battle. On 1st November 1919 Lord Wester Wemyss left the Board of Admiralty, and the position of First Sea Lord has, since that date, been held by Lord Beatty.

NOTE TO FIRST EDITION

SINCE this book went to press, in reply to a question asked in the House on 4th May, 1927, it was officially stated that "it had been decided to issue what was known as the Official Record of the Battle of Jutland." In response to a further question as to whether this would be "in the same terms as were *originally laid before* the Board of Admiralty," it was stated that it would be "the Harper Report" and that "it would be in the same terms as were *approved by* the Board of Admiralty."

As explained in the Introduction, Admiral Harper's original work was completed in 1919; it was a *Record* and not a Report. Since then, all essential facts about the Battle have been made public in the British and German official Histories.

The object with which this book was written was not to controvert these facts, but to show how the public has been misled by their being distorted.

NOTE TO THIRD IMPRESSION

ON 25th May, 1927, the day before the First Edition of this book was published, it was officially stated in the House of Commons that Admiral Harper's Record would be published "as originally compiled, without any amendment."

The publication of an eight-year-old Record can add nothing to our present knowledge of the *facts*.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT JUTLAND

CHAPTER I

WEATHER CONDITIONS

IT is of the first importance for the student and critic of the Battle of Jutland to keep in mind the conditions of visibility during the various stages of the battle. The weather had an important bearing on the issues; in fact, it is not too much to say that if it had been clear the tactics used on both sides might have been very different to what they were. Clear weather would have been unfavourable to the fleet which wished to avoid action, and would, therefore, have been to our advantage.

During the early stages of the battle-cruiser action the visibility was comparatively good; but, by 4.15 p.m., the visibility to the eastward had become considerably reduced, and favoured the enemy. By 5 p.m. these condi-

tions became worse and, as Beatty states: "Our ships being silhouetted against a clear horizon to the westward, while the enemy were for the most part obscured by mist, only showing up clearly at intervals."

By the time the battle fleet came into action these conditions had become still worse; the sky was overcast, the sea calm, the wind light and, owing to the combination of atmospheric conditions and the smoke from the ships, the visibility was very bad, and great difficulty was experienced in distinguishing ships.

Extracts from the published reports of Flag Officers and Captains show that it was quite impossible, after 6 p.m., to state the range of visibility with any degree of accuracy. The visibility varied in different directions and in different localities. It seems that at no time, after 6 p.m., was the general average visibility more than 12,000 yards, or 6 nautical miles, and as a rule it was less. In exceptional cases, in certain directions, objects could be seen for a short time up to 16,000 yards, but in other directions they could be seen only 2,000 or 3,000 yards away. It is safe to say that, at no time after 6 p.m., were more than three or four of the enemy capital ships seen at one and the same time from any one of our capital ships.

These facts have not, previously, been given

sufficient prominence. Jellicoe was unaware throughout the action of the strength, or composition, of the German Fleet, and he could not ascertain it from the occasional glimpses obtained of a few ships through the mist and smoke.

On the morning of 1st June Jellicoe inquired by signal as to the whereabouts of the *Indefatigable*, and other ships, thereby indicating that he was actually unaware of our own losses on the previous day.

It will bear repeating that the average visibility should be constantly in the mind of anyone who is considering the tactics at Jutland, and more especially when studying, or even glancing at, any diagram showing the positions of the ships.

If, when studying a diagram, the student and critic would draw a rough circle with its centre at the *Iron Duke*, and with a radius of 5 to 6 miles, he would realize, approximately, how much of the depicted situation was seen by Jellicoe at the time. Always remembering, also, that many portions of the area inside this circle were shut out by smoke from intervening ships. It is not, however, equitable to judge the tactics employed entirely by what could be seen from the *Iron Duke*. Such a method would ignore the presence of other ships and other Admirals, who, although they

had equally bad visibility, were viewing the situation from different positions in the line. Diagrams which are shaded to indicate what Jellicoe could see are, therefore, nearly as misleading as ordinary diagrams. In fact, the only method to arrive at a fair and just appreciation is to remember, *and to keep on remembering*, that our Admirals were *not* sitting up aloft, in a balloon, with a clear bird's-eye view of the fleets, conducting the battle as on a tactical board.

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF UNDER-WATER ATTACK ON THE TACTICS AT JUTLAND

IN the hundred years and more which intervened between Trafalgar and Jutland not only had steam and long-range guns completely changed the character of naval warfare, but the advent of under-water weapons and the submarine had profoundly influenced tactics.

It is quite impossible for anybody to begin to understand the Battle of Jutland, much less to form a just or reasoned opinion about it, without thoroughly grasping the nature of the various forms of under-water attack and the measures necessary to counter them. The former may be tabulated as follows:

1. Torpedo attacks from heavy ships in the line.
2. Torpedo attacks by light surface craft.
   (*a*) By day.
   (*b*) By night.

3. Torpedo attacks by submarines.
4. Mines dropped by retreating ships in the path of their pursuers.
5. Mines laid in the form of a " minefield ".

Let us consider each of these in turn, and see how they influenced the movements of the rival fleets.

1. Torpedo Attacks from heavy Ships in the Line.

Battleships and battle-cruisers on both sides were so heavily gunned and such conspicuous targets at anything inside torpedo range, so long as daylight held, that a torpedo duel, naturally, did not commend itself to either side. On the other hand, the torpedo armaments of the capital ships, taken *en masse*, were formidable and could not be ignored. A few lucky hits under-water might have much reduced the speed of one or two battleships, even though they did not sink them, as actually happened in the case of the *Marlborough*, although at first the damage did not greatly impede her.

Lame ducks are a serious embarrassment to a Commander-in-Chief. He must either reduce the speed of the whole fleet to their speed, which may force him into a position of great tactical disadvantage, or he must

detach ships to protect the laggards, or he must leave them to look after themselves.

The net result of this particular menace, so far as Jutland was concerned, was that neither side tried to get within torpedo range of the opposing battle line, and it was definitely to the advantage of the British Fleet with superior gun power to keep outside that range if possible.

2. Torpedo Attacks by light Surface Craft.

(*a*) *By day :*

Destroyers, and to a lesser degree light cruisers, can appreciably influence the tactics of the battle fleet if, by using their speed, they can mass in a position from which to launch a torpedo attack. A day attack may be made from a bow bearing, at comparatively long range, the torpedoes having less distance to run because their quarry is coming to meet them. The light surface craft can also close very rapidly, and this, coupled with the fact that they are not conspicuous targets, makes it very hard for the battleships' guns to hit them before they release their torpedoes.

In this connection, the non-technical reader should realize that a destroyer flotilla may launch an attack at a distance of 20,000

yards, but may be away and out of sight long before the torpedoes reach their objective.

There are three methods of parrying these daytime attacks: the first is for the battle fleet to hold the enemy craft at arm's length with their gunfire; the second is to intercept them with our own flotillas and light cruisers before they are able to release their torpedoes with any prospect of hitting; the third is to swing the individual ships of the threatened battle line off their original course and either let the enemy torpedoes expend themselves short, or pass through the intervals between the ships.

It is clearly advantageous to prevent an attack being launched, but this is not always possible with a determined enemy, especially in misty weather. Once torpedoes are running, it is, obviously, stupid for the ships attacked to stand on and offer themselves as a sitting target, so to speak, and the question of turning towards or away from an attack is a highly technical one; but it is sufficient to say here that under the conditions prevailing at the time of the massed German torpedo attack, to cover the second retreat of the High Sea Fleet, it was the accepted principle and invariable practice by the Admirals on both sides to swing their ships away, and there was one occasion when Jellicoe resorted to this manœuvre.

(*b*) *By night:*

Conditions of low visibility may improve the chances of surface torpedo-craft, for surprise is necessarily a great factor in their success; but the less the range of vision the greater their difficulty in finding their quarry, in manœuvring into a favourable position to attack and in distinguishing friend from foe. At night, too, the surprise may be mutual, and the guns of a battleship on the alert may make short work of a destroyer sighted at almost point-blank range. At night, too, the interval between firing a torpedo and it reaching its mark is so small that it gives little time for evasive manœuvres on either side.

The night after Jutland found two huge fleets, each knowing the other was in the vicinity, but neither wishing to risk a meeting. At first sight this would seem to have afforded an ideal opportunity for using torpedo craft. Actually, both Commanders-in-Chief were disinclined to loose their flotillas into the uncertainty of darkness on the "hit or miss principle"; both kept them in company with the battle fleets, although the British flotillas were well clear astern.

A flotilla might easily have spent much precious fuel and achieved nothing; there

might easily have been "regrettable incidents" with friends, and, at daylight, when destroyers became vitally necessary for a renewed general engagement, they would probably have been widely scattered and not available at the psychological moment.

3. Torpedo Attacks by Submarines.

The submarine differs from the destroyer in that it is very much slower, and has much less range of vision; but it is far less conspicuous and it can disappear instantly after firing a torpedo. It is more difficult, therefore, for an under-water craft to attain a favourable position to launch its attack, especially in a fleet action with ships moving at high speed; it has rather to await the opportunity afforded by an unsuspecting quarry coming towards it. Limitation of vision prohibits long-range attacks, while the fact that submerged craft cannot manœuvre *en masse* like destroyers, lessens the chances of hitting on the principle of "browning the covey".

On the other hand, the extreme difficulty of detecting a small object like a periscope, which at the time Jutland was fought was the sole means of locating a submarine's presence, made them objects of constant alarm to surface ships, especially the deep-draught battle-

ship and battle-cruiser. Experience had not yet shown that a mass of ships moving in company at high speed present a very difficult target to a submarine, which, under such conditions, is wont to be more concerned with her own safety than with a carefully planned attack.

Precautions against submarine attack on our side took the form of an anti-submarine screen of destroyers scouting on the bows of the battle fleet and battle-cruisers. This undoubtedly tended to tie certain of the British flotillas to this duty when they might, otherwise, have been free to take up a more aggressive rôle ; but it must be remembered that, whereas the Germans could count on the fact that the British fleet had come too far and too fast to have submarines in company, our command had to bear in mind that we were meeting the enemy more or less in his own waters and within easy range of his submarine bases.

It is easy to be wise after the event and to say that it is now known that there were no submarines in the vicinity at all, and that it should have been obvious that there never could have been any, but it should be noted that there was every reason, before the action, to believe they would be used by the enemy, and this belief was strengthened during the

action by categorical reports of submarines sighted continually being made to Jellicoe.[1]

Measures to counter submarine attack can take the form of a detour, so that it is never in position to fire a torpedo ; this necessitates ample warning ; alternatively, and more normally, the safest line of action is to charge straight for the submarine and compel it to dive for its own safety.

In actual fact the false reports of submarines, disconcerting as they were, had little influence on the course of events at Jutland, except, as already mentioned, a tendency to keep part of our destroyer flotillas acting on the defensive.

4. Mines dropped by retreating Ships.

The possibility of running into mines dropped by a retreating enemy fleet had been taken into very full consideration by the

[1] Between 3.35 p.m. and 10 p.m. on 31st May, thirty reports of enemy submarines were made by our ships. Of these two were reported as seen on the surface, two were reported as being sighted breaking the surface and two were believed to have been rammed, although not actually seen at the moment. Of the remainder, some stated that a periscope had been sighted, one remarking that the alleged periscope was undoubtedly a dummy.

Beatty in his report states, at about 4 p.m. :

" It would appear at this time that we were passing through a screen of enemy submarines."

British high command, both afloat and at the Admiralty before Jutland. This menace coupled with the torpedo advantage enjoyed by ships ahead over ships astern was regarded as being so serious as to make direct pursuit prohibitive.

Under-water weapons had, therefore, introduced an entirely new element which under such circumstances did much to neutralize the advantages which the more powerful fleet might have secured in olden days.

"Nothing but ample time and superior speed can be an answer, and this means that, unless the meeting of the fleets takes place fairly early in the day, it is most difficult to fight to a finish," wrote Jellicoe before Jutland. "Time" and "light", however, were the two things denied him, nor did he have more than a couple of knots superiority in speed, battle fleet for battle fleet.

Again, it is easy to say that the enemy did not, in fact, drop mines to cover his retreat. All that was known at the time was that certain of the enemy capital ships were fitted for mine laying and that he had practised it since the outbreak of war.

5. Mines laid in the Form of a Mine-field.

The German minefields were extensive and

were fairly accurately known to our command. They limited the exits and re-entries of the High Sea Fleet to certain channels which were kept swept, and this had a considerable bearing on Jellicoe's strategy as we shall see in due course. They also precluded our fleet from following the enemy to the German coast the morning after Jutland.

With this brief survey of two vital factors, —weather and under-water attack—to give us a right perspective, we may now proceed to examine the course of the battle and to trace the parts played by the chief personalities.

CHAPTER III

PRELIMINARY MOVEMENTS

A QUESTION that is often asked is: "How did the Battle of Jutland come to be fought?"

It is necessary to have some acquaintance with the motives underlying the movements of the opposing fleets before the battle to enable a correct appreciation to be formed of the battle itself.

In naval actions it is rarely, if ever, the case that both sides wish to fight. Rival fleets do not proceed to sea in battle formation with a mutual intention of seeking a pitched battle in the open. It may be that one of the combatant nations has an object to attain, through the medium of its navy, but in order to attain that object fully it may be desirable to avoid a fleet action with its consequent certain weakening, or possible annihilation, of the fleet itself. In such a case the opposing forces would endeavour to force a fleet action as the best

method of preventing the enemy attaining his object.

During the Great War it was the wish of everyone in the Grand Fleet to come to grips with the High Seas Fleet, in a naval action, but for nearly two years our battle fleet had to exercise patience and "serve by waiting". The time was not, however, wasted, neither did the efficiency of the fleet suffer. Frequent cruises were made into the North Sea and the time in harbour was occupied in rigorous training and exercises in gunnery and torpedo work.

It is no easy matter to keep a fleet in a high state of efficiency when all, both officers and men, are straining at the leash to get at the enemy. Admiral Jellicoe, as Commander-in-Chief, was personally responsible for the state of efficiency of the fleet, and it was he, more than any other, who built up that efficiency, not only by virtue of his position, and his ability, but also because he was beloved and trusted by everyone in his great command.

While the Grand Fleet was periodically sweeping the sea, the German Battle Fleet remained impassive in protected harbours. The enemy battle-cruisers made periodical "tip-and-run" raids on our coast and were, more than once, brought to action, with indecisive results, by our battle-cruisers.

The use of force by our ships to attack the enemy ships in his protected harbours, or to draw them into the open sea, could only have resulted in failure, owing to the presence of minefields, submarines and shore batteries. It would have been madness to have embarked on a forlorn hope of this nature, with the almost certain loss of a large proportion of our fleet, on which the allied cause and the future of the British Empire depended.

The German Fleet did not want a general action and, provided they remained in harbour or cruised only in the limited waters of the Heligoland Bight or of the Southern Baltic, there seemed no way in which they could be drawn into one.

Admiral Scheer had for long been an opponent of the policy of deliberate inactivity for the High Seas Fleet. He was an advocate of submarine warfare on merchant vessels, but saw no reason why the German Navy should confine itself to this form of warfare, when it had a fleet in being.

SCHEER'S PLAN

He assumed command of the High Seas Fleet early in 1916, at a time when our blockade of Germany's ports was being tightened up, with the result that its effects were

more universally felt in that country. Scheer realized that it was becoming increasingly necessary for the High Seas Fleet to make some demonstration to justify its existence. An opportunity soon occurred when, owing to the feelings of neutral nations being aroused by the attack on the *Sussex*, many submarines were temporarily withdrawn from the trade routes. These submarines, therefore, were available for other services, and enabled plans, for offensive action, to be drawn up.

Scheer had no wish to encounter our Grand Fleet at full strength, so he sought a method whereby he might possibly succeed in bringing his whole available force against a portion of our fleet and thus cause some diminution of our power.

His plan was as follows: The majority of his available submarines were to be stationed off the Pentland Firth, Moray Firth and Firth of Forth, our three main Grand Fleet bases; some were also to be stationed off the Humber. He then intended to send his battle-cruisers to bombard Sunderland. If, as was practically certain, the Rosyth force would emerge to attack the raiders, it was hoped that the submarines stationed off the Firth of Forth would account for some of these ships and that, if all went well, the remainder of this force

would be led towards, and possibly brought to action by, the High Seas Fleet waiting well to the eastward. Meanwhile, the submarines off our other bases would not only be able to give him warning if the main fleet came out, but would also have an opportunity to attack.

Scheer was of course aware that Jellicoe with his whole fleet made frequent excursions into the North Sea, in many cases penetrating well south. As he had no desire to come to grips with the British main fleet he also provided for an efficient airship reconnaissance, which itself must of necessity depend on favourable weather.

In the event of the weather proving unfavourable for airships Scheer devised an alternative plan. The battle-cruisers, commanded by Admiral von Hipper, would be sent towards the Skagerrak so that, by showing themselves off the Norwegian Coast, they would draw some of our forces in that direction. Meanwhile, Scheer, with his battle fleet, would proceed up the coast of Denmark in support. By this means our forces would be drawn out over the waiting submarines and might also be placed at a disadvantage, especially if only a portion of our fleet emerged, or if the squadrons were divided. By keeping in the eastern part of the North Sea, com-

paratively near to his own base, Scheer assumed that his advanced forces would guard him against surprise, if our whole fleet emerged. The submarines duly took up their positions off our bases, but the weather proved unfavourable for airships, and as the date approached when it would be necessary to withdraw the under-water craft, Scheer was forced to abandon the Sunderland scheme, or take the risk of meeting Jellicoe with his whole fleet. He therefore adopted the alternative scheme.

THE GRAND FLEET SAILS

Our Admiralty, with its nearly perfect system of intelligence, was not, however, ignorant of the movements of the enemy submarines, or of the fact that unusual activity was taking place in the German Fleet. A telegram was accordingly sent to Jellicoe, on 30th May, informing him that the German Fleet intended some operation, and warning him to hold himself in readiness for eventualities.

The Grand Fleet was, at this time, divided up among the three main northern bases as follows:

At Scapa Flow,[1] Orkney Islands, under

[1] See Appendix for details.

Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, Commander-in-Chief.

The First and Fourth Battle Squadrons.
The Third Battle-Cruiser Squadron.
The Second Cruiser Squadron.
The Fourth Light Cruiser Squadron, and
The Fourth; part of Eleventh; and Twelfth Flotillas of Torpedo-Boat Destroyers.

At Invergordon,[1] under Vice-Admiral Sir Martyn Jerram.

The Second Battle Squadron.
The First Cruiser Squadron and part of the Eleventh Flotilla of Torpedo-Boat Destroyers.

At Rosyth,[1] under Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty.

The Fifth Battle Squadron.
The First and Second Battle-Cruiser Squadrons.
The First, Second and Third Light Cruiser Squadrons.
Part of the First; Part of the Ninth; Part of the Tenth and Thirteenth Flotillas of Torpedo-Boat Destroyers.

At 5.40 p.m. on 30th May a further telegram was sent from the Admiralty, which contained

[1] See Appendix for details.

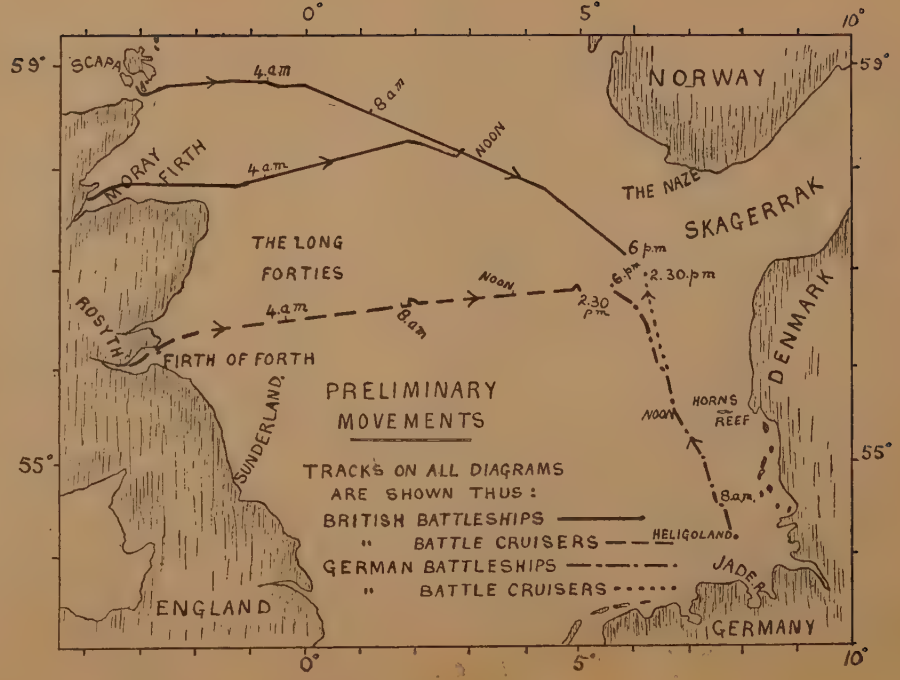

DIAGRAM 1

10 P.M., MAY 30 TO 6 P.M., MAY 31

additional information and in which orders were conveyed to Jellicoe to concentrate his fleet to the eastward of the "Long Forties".[1] Jellicoe was also informed that eight enemy submarines were probably in the North Sea.

On receipt of the information Jellicoe sent the following instructions to the units of his fleet not stationed at Scapa Flow.

To Vice-Admiral Jerram, commanding the Second Battle Squadron at Invergordon:

"Leave as soon as ready. Pass through Lat. 58° 15′ N., Long. 2° 00′ E. Meet me 2 p.m. to-morrow 31st, Lat. 57° 45′ N., Long. 4° 15′ E. Several submarines known to be in North Sea (1930)." [2]

[1] The "Long Forties" extend for some 110 miles from the coast of Aberdeenshire.

[2] The figures at the end of a message indicate the time of origin of that message, or in other words the actual time, expressed in the four-figure notation, at which the message was written. The instructions contained in this message were, therefore, actually given by the Commander-in-Chief at 7.30 p.m. The time of origin gives little indication of the time of *receipt* of the message by the person to whom it is addressed. This depends partly on the method used to transmit the message. In the case of cipher messages sent by Wireless Telegraphy it depends to even a greater extent on the time taken to decipher the message. It is clear, therefore, that instructions contained in any signal message, by whatever method it is transmitted, cannot be acted on by

To Vice-Admiral Beatty, commanding the Battle-Cruiser Force at Rosyth:

"Available vessels, Battle-Cruiser Fleet, Fifth Battle Squadron and Destroyers, including Harwich Destroyers, proceed to approximate position Lat. 56° 40′ N., Long 5° E. Desirable to economize destroyers' fuel. Presume that you will be there about 2 p.m. to-morrow, Wednesday, 31st May. I shall be in about 57° 45′ N., 4° 15′ E., by 2 p.m. unless delayed by fog. Third Battle-Cruiser Squadron *Chester* and *Canterbury* will leave with me. I may send them on to your rendezvous. If no news by 2 p.m. stand towards me to get in visual communication. I will steer for Horns Reef from position Lat. 57° 45′ N., Long. 4° 15′ E. (1937)."

The Harwich Destroyers referred to in this message were part of the Ninth and part of the Tenth Flotillas—eight in all—which were temporarily stationed at Rosyth.

The distance between the positions in which

the recipient until, at least, some minutes after the time at which the actual instructions were given. The delay in the case of visual messages, sent in plain language, should be very small as compared with that of cipher messages sent by wireless. No time of origin is appended to signals made by Flags, in this case the time of receipt of the instructions should be practically identical with the time the signal is hoisted.

the battle fleet and battle-cruiser fleet, respectively, were ordered to be by 2 p.m. was 69 miles, and in this connection Jellicoe, in his despatch, states:

"I felt no anxiety in regard to the advanced position of the force under Sir David Beatty, supported as it was by four ships of the Fifth Battle Squadron, as this force was far superior in gun-power to the First Scouting Group, and the speed of the slowest ships was such as to enable it to keep out of range of superior enemy forces."

It is probable, however, that Jellicoe would have been somewhat less easy in his mind if he had thought Beatty would divide his forces and go into action unsupported by these four powerful ships.

The various sections of the fleet left harbour, in accordance with prearranged plans, during the evening of 30th May.

THE BATTLE FLEET

By 10.30 p.m. the battle fleet at Scapa with its attendant cruisers and destroyers had cleared the harbour, and course was shaped for the arranged rendezvous.

Two reports were made by the *Trident* (a destroyer cruising off Rosyth), one at 9.20

p.m. and one at 9.45 p.m., that she had been attacked by a submarine; no damage was, however, done to her.

A number of neutral vessels and trawlers were met with by the battle fleet at intervals during the passage and were examined by the destroyers attached to the cruiser screen.

The squadron from Invergordon had also cleared the harbour shortly after 10 p.m. and, without incident, proceeded on its way to join the battle fleet from Scapa Flow. Junction between these two fleets was made at 11 a.m. on the following day. Wireless reports of enemy vessels having been sighted, by the light cruisers ahead of the battle-cruiser fleet, began to come through to the *Iron Duke* at about 2.30 p.m. Immediately the first report was received, Jellicoe ordered the speed of the battle fleet, and all other ships in his company, to be increased, and also ordered steam to be raised, immediately, for "full speed".

When in harbour, all ships of the Grand Fleet were kept complete with fuel in readiness for any eventuality. On leaving harbour for any operation it was very desirable, especially in the case of the destroyers, to economize fuel to the fullest extent compatible with efficiency. Any unnecessary expenditure

of fuel in the preliminary stages of an operation, the extent of which could not be predicted with any certainty, might cause a shortage at a critical period of the operation; thereby resulting, possibly, in failure instead of success. The fleet would not, therefore, have steam for more than a knot, or two, in excess of the speed at which it was intended to proceed. With everything ready—and everything was always ready in the engine-room departments of our ships—steam for "full speed" could be raised with very little delay.

As the progressive reports of the action being fought by the battle-cruiser fleet to the southward were received the speed of the battle fleet was worked up by steps until at 3.13 p.m. the fleet was steaming 19 knots and at 3.58 p.m., 20 knots, the maximum speed at which the battle fleet as a whole could keep station.

At 3.13 p.m., on May 31st, the columns of battleships were opened to manœuvring distance in readiness for instant deployment into line of battle, and the cruiser screen, stationed some miles ahead, was ordered to extend its distance. Owing, however, to the fact that the armoured cruisers of the First and Second Cruiser Squadrons, forming this screen, had little, if any, margin of speed over that at which

the battle fleet was then steaming, in its endeavour to support our battle-cruisers, the cruiser screen was unable to increase its distance to the desired extent. The object of extending this distance was to ensure getting into visual touch with the battle-cruisers at the earliest possible moment. Jellicoe's telegram of instructions to Beatty, it will be remembered, contained the following: "If no news by 2 p.m. stand towards me to get in visual communication." This emphasized the well-known importance of having visual communication between the Commander-in-Chief and his advanced forces, but, as will be seen later, visual communication was not established until it was almost too late to be of use.

For the moment we may leave the battle fleet heading for the rendezvous and ready to form line of battle at any moment.

THE BATTLE-CRUISER FLEET

The Rosyth Force had cleared the harbour by 10.30 p.m. At 3.55 a.m. the light cruiser *Galatea* reported being fired at by a submarine, but nothing further of any interest occurred during the night.

Scheer's efforts to reduce the strength of our main fleet by submarine attacks, as it

emerged from its bases, had failed. No capital ship had been attacked and no damage was done to any of our ships. It is doubtful also if these submarines rendered any valuable assistance to Scheer by the meagre information they were able to give him of the movements of our squadrons. Such information as they afforded him did not, in any way, indicate that our whole fleet was out, and concentrating in his path.

At 8.19 a.m., when some 180 miles from Rosyth, the light cruiser *Yarmouth*, then a few miles ahead of the battle-cruisers, reported sighting a submarine and, on receipt of this report by Beatty, the whole force was immediately ordered to alter course 8 points, or 90 degrees to port.[1] This course was followed for eighteen minutes, during which time Beatty made further inquiries, of the *Yarmouth*, as to the position of the submarine which had been reported. Only the periscope had been seen from the *Yarmouth*, and nothing further was seen by any other ship in the vicinity. In any case this submarine, although it caused no actual damage to any of our ships, had more effect on the movements of our fleet than had any of those stationed nearer the coast, as it delayed our battle-cruisers reaching their rendezvous—the big alteration made in the

[1] See chapter on "Under-Water Attack," p. 32.

course having the effect of adding some 6 miles to the distance to be travelled.

BEATTY'S FATAL ERROR

Beatty now made a decision which was to cost us dearly a few hours later. At 10.10 a.m., on May 31st, the Fifth Battle Squadron was ordered to take station on a compass bearing N.W. and distant 5 miles from his flagship, the *Lion*.

It is incomprehensible why such a position was selected for this powerful force. In Jellicoe's battle plans [1] this squadron was "given the functions of a free wing squadron, which, not forming part of the main line of battle, could be used at any opportune moment in an action for bringing a concentration to bear on part of the enemy fleet, or otherwise by independent attack to modify the rigidity of the old single line ahead formation. . . ."

It may be that Beatty also desired to give this squadron a freedom of action instead of keeping them rigidly in the same line as the battle-cruisers. It was, however, most improbable that the enemy, if met with at all, would be sighted from the north-westward or westward. The most probable directions for first sighting him was obviously easterly

[1] *Official History of the War—Naval Operations*, Vol. III, p. 315.

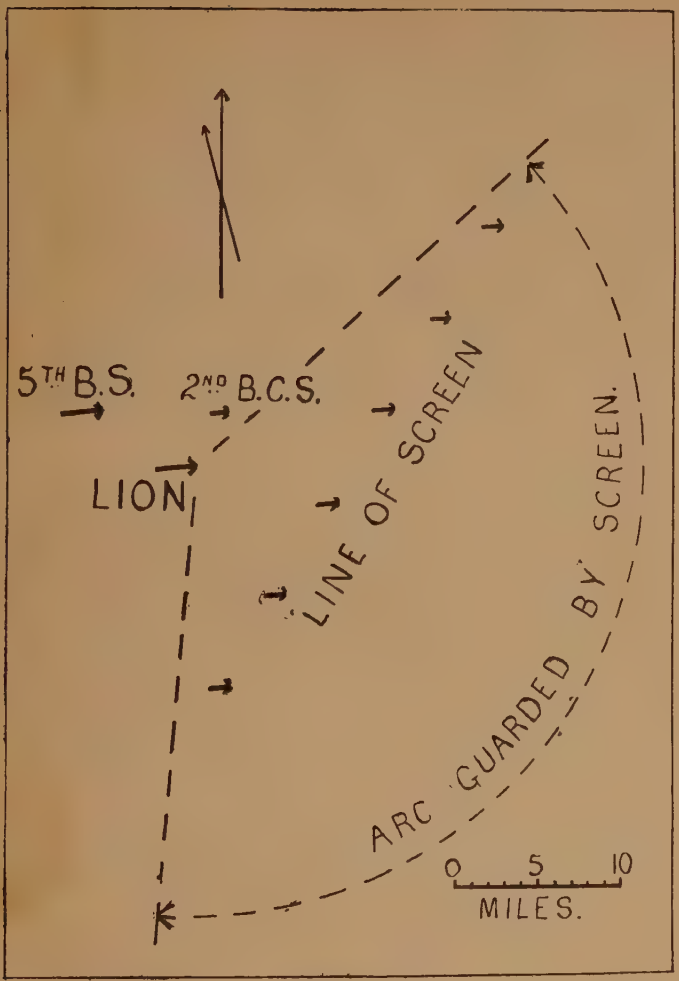

Diagram 2

Stationing of Fifth Battle Squadron, 10.10 a.m., May 31

or southerly. That this was Beatty's own opinion at the time can be seen by a glance at Diagram No. 2, which shows the disposition of his advanced cruiser screen. The diagram indicates, approximately, the arc guarded by the screen and, therefore, the arc in which he anticipated that the enemy would most probably be first seen.

In the event of an enemy being sighted to the north-eastward or eastward, it would be Beatty's endeavour to cut them off from their base to the south-eastward. This he actually did when they were sighted, his action being fully approved of by Jellicoe.

The position was, therefore, that Beatty expected and had prepared his outposts for a meeting with the enemy to the south-eastward, yet he had stationed the heaviest and slowest ships of his force 5 miles to the north-westward, where they would almost certainly be delayed coming into action. In other words, he made the fatal and elementary mistake of dividing his forces, so that he could only engage with part of them. This, as will be seen later, produced results which can only be termed disastrous.

At 1.30 p.m. the line of direction of the cruiser screen was altered to E.N.E. and the Fifth Battle Squadron was stationed N.N.W. 5 miles from the *Lion*.

THE HIGH SEAS FLEET

The High Seas Fleet left the Jade between 2 a.m. and 2.30 a.m. 31st May, the battle fleet being preceded by the cruisers and battle-cruisers. The battle-cruisers drew rapidly ahead for the purpose of reaching the vicinity of the Norwegian coast before dark, it having been arranged that the battle fleet would join them the next morning.

By 2.30 p.m. the German battle fleet had passed Horns Reef, the battle-cruisers being then some 50 miles ahead. An hour or two before this five reconnaissance airships had been sent out, but they saw nothing of our fleet and rendered no assistance to Scheer. The German Admiral had at this time no suspicion that the Grand Fleet was at sea, steaming to meet him. Jellicoe's dispositions were, however, well calculated to bring the German fleet to action with the whole Grand Fleet.

CHAPTER IV

BATTLE-CRUISER ACTION

HAVING arrived at the position ordered and no news having been received of the enemy, our battle-cruiser fleet, in accordance with the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief, altered course to the northward to close our battle fleet. At 2.15 p.m., as this alteration was being made, the light cruiser *Galatea*, 17 miles distant from the *Lion*, sighted a steamer, apparently stopped and blowing off steam, some 10 miles to the eastward.

The presence of this neutral merchant steamer undoubtedly precipitated the action which followed. It is impossible to conjecture what the result would have been if this vessel had not unintentionally blundered into sight of the rival fleets, but the presence of an enemy would not have been known to either side until the rival battle-cruisers had proceeded some considerable distance farther to the northward. The enemy battle-cruisers would by then have extended their distance

from the supporting High Seas Fleet and our battle-cruiser force would have been more favourably placed for receiving support from our battle fleet. In fact, the situation, when contact was eventually made, would have been to our greater advantage. Conjecture is, however, useless—to return to facts.

THE BATTLE OPENS

Immediately on sighting the steamer, the *Galatea* steamed towards her at full speed, and quickly made out the masts and funnels of a warship in her vicinity. It was soon seen that the steamer had been stopped by two German destroyers, and that there was a squadron of cruisers a little to the north-eastward. A wireless report of sighting the enemy was made without delay by the *Galatea*, and fire was opened on the two destroyers by the *Galatea* and *Phaeton* at 2.28 p.m. Four minutes after this the enemy cruiser *Elbing* opened fire on the *Galatea* and *Phaeton*, the range being about 15,000 yards. Our light cruisers were outranged, so course was altered in an endeavour to lead the enemy in the direction of our battle fleet, without losing touch but keeping just out of gun range. At 2.35 p.m. the *Galatea* reported that she had sighted a large amount of smoke, as though

from a fleet, bearing E.N.E. These ships were the German battle-cruisers, which were coming to the westward, at high speed, to give support to the light cruisers.

Beatty's battle-cruisers, at this time, had just altered course to the south-eastward, the signal to do so having been made by flags as the turn was being made. The flags could not be distinguished by the battleship *Barham*, flagship of the Fifth Battle Squadron, at the distance she had been stationed, and it was not repeated to her by other means at the *Lion's* disposal. It was some minutes, therefore, before Evan-Thomas realized that the battle-cruisers had altered course. As they had also increased speed to 22 knots the Fifth Battle Squadron was soon left over ten miles astern, and was for some time actually out of sight. This failure, in the *Lion*, to convey the executive order to turn to the *Barham* still further delayed the time at which those powerful battleships could come into action to support the battle-cruisers. A preparatory signal for altering course had been made by the *Lion* about five minutes earlier, and if at the same time the signal " Close " had been sent to the Fifth Battle Squadron the distance between the two squadrons would have been rapidly diminishing, instead of increasing, at the time the *Lion* made the executive signal.

The latest report from the *Galatea* made it clear that the enemy would not be able to escape by the Horns Reef passage before being brought to action. Beatty, therefore, subsequently altered course to the east and north-east to close the enemy.

The seaplane-carrier *Engadine*, which was attached to the battle-cruiser fleet, was at 2.45 p.m. ordered to send up her machine. The seaplane took the air at 3.8 p.m., but, owing to poor visibility, could see little of the enemy ships. Three reports were made by signal, but these did not reach the *Lion*. After about half an hour the seaplane had to descend on account of engine trouble. With this exception, no British air-craft took any part in the action.[1]

At 3.34 p.m. the ships reported by the *Galatea* were identified as five German battle-cruisers, with cruisers and destroyers in company.

Although the presence of the enemy battle-

[1] The seaplane-carrier *Campania*, attached to the fleet at Scapa Flow, was some hours late in leaving, owing to a misapprehension as to the time the battle fleet was sailing. She could not have overtaken the fleet in time for her machines to be of any use for reconnaissance purposes; so, at 4.21 a.m., she was ordered by Jellicoe to return to harbour. This obviated the necessity of detaching destroyers to act as a screen for this ship alone.

cruisers was now known to both Jellicoe and Beatty, there was no reason for either of them to suppose this indicated that the enemy battle fleet was also at sea. The warning telegrams sent from the Admiralty on 30th May indicated that the enemy intended an operation, probably on a large scale. About noon on the 31st, however, a message was sent from the Admiralty to inform Jellicoe that directional wireless placed the flagship of the High Seas Fleet in the Jade River at 11.10 a.m.[1]

All messages made by wireless from the Admiralty to the Commander-in-Chief would, according to normal procedure, also be received by Beatty in the *Lion*. It was only natural, therefore, that both Jellicoe and Beatty should think the operation being undertaken by the enemy was one in which his battle fleet was not taking an active part.

A RUNNING FIGHT TO THE SOUTH

As soon as the presence of our battle-cruisers became known to Hipper he turned his squadron to the southward for the purpose of falling back on the support of his battle fleet, and also for the purpose of drawing our battle-cruisers to within their reach.

Jellicoe, in his despatch, states:

[1] "*Official History of the War—Naval Operations*," Vol. III, p. 376.

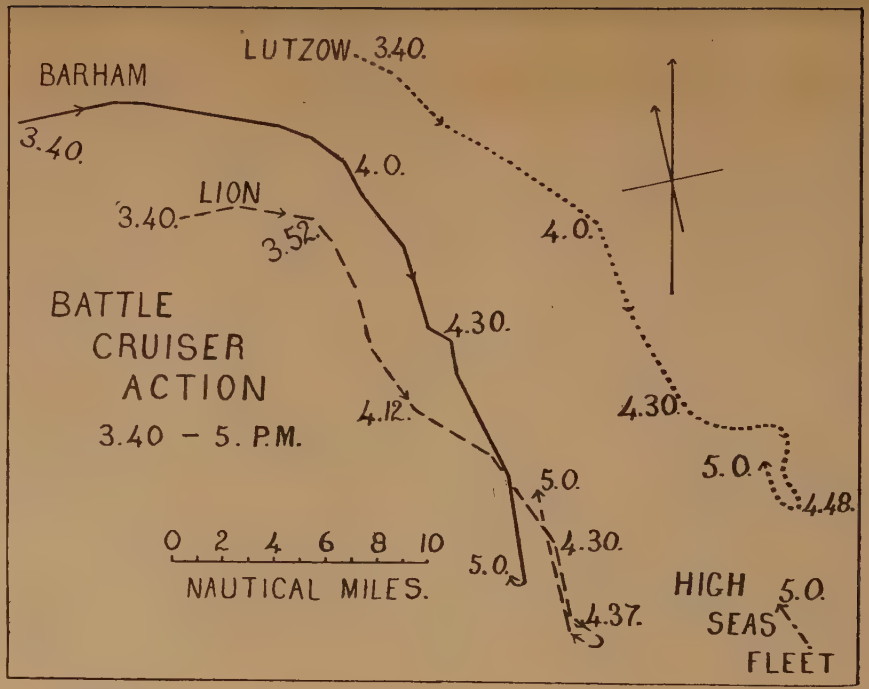

DIAGRAM 3

MAY 31

"When Sir David Beatty sighted the enemy battle-cruisers he adopted the correct and only possible course in engaging and endeavouring to keep between the enemy and his base. Whether the First Scouting Group was unsupported or not, his duty would be to engage and keep touch with the enemy vessels of similar class to his own, so long as he was not in manifestly inferior force. In this case he had a great superiority, and there could be no question as to his action."

Fire was opened at 3.45 p.m from both sides practically simultaneously. The battle-cruiser *Lutzow*, the flagship of the German First Scouting Group, fired the first shot. The opening range was, in reality, about 16,000 yards, but as accurate range-finding was impossible owing to bad light, our battle-cruisers miscalculated the range, making it considerably greater. This was all to Hipper's advantage, as the guns of our battle-cruisers could outrange those of his ships. By withholding fire until the range had closed to one at which the German guns would be equally effective to our own, the superior gun-power of our battle-cruisers was not exploited to its fullest extent.

A running fight now took place between the respective battle-cruisers, the superiority

in Beatty's favour being 6 to 5; but this first phase of the action went decidedly in favour of the enemy. At about 4 p.m. the *Lion* was very badly hit, a shell striking "Q" turret and putting it out of action. Several fatal casualties were caused and the ship would, without doubt, have been lost save for the presence of mind of Major Harvey, Royal Marines, who, although fatally wounded, realized the danger and gave the necessary orders to close and flood the magazines. This action on his part, which won him a posthumous Victoria Cross, saved the ship.

At two minutes past four, the range having then closed to 14,600 yards, the battle-cruiser *Indefatigable* was hit by three shell, falling together, which were fired by the German battle-cruiser, *Von der Tann*. An explosion followed and she fell out of the line, sinking by the stern. After being hit once again she turned over and sank.

Six minutes after this, at 4.8 p.m., the Fifth Battle Squadron was able to open fire at a range of 20,000 yards and, although the fire from these ships' 15-inch guns could not have been as effective at this range as it would have been at the closer range at which the battle-cruisers were engaged, the effect was felt at once. In this connection, Beatty states in his despatch:

"The enemy's fire now appeared to slacken."

The battle-cruiser *Queen Mary* was the next victim. At 4.26 p.m. this ship was struck by a salvo and, almost instantaneously, there was a terrific upheaval and a dense cloud of smoke rose high in the air.

The battle-cruiser *Tiger* was following next astern of the *Queen Mary*, and as she passed through the cloud of smoke, about 30 seconds after the explosion, there was a heavy fall of debris on her decks, but, according to her report,[1] no sign of the *Queen Mary*. Seventeen survivors were subsequently picked up by destroyers.

Faulty distribution of fire in our battle-cruiser squadron resulted in the German battle-cruiser *Derfflinger* being unfired at for some time. That ship was, therefore, able to carry out a form of target practice, using one

[1] "I observed a salvo pitch abreast 'Q' turret of *Queen Mary* (this was the first time I had seen *Queen Mary* hit) and almost instantaneously there was a terrific upheaval and a dense cloud of smoke. This could not altogether be avoided as *Tiger* was close up (about 2 cables) from *Queen Mary*. As *Tiger* passed through the cloud there was a heavy fall of material on her decks, but no sign whatever could be seen of the *Queen Mary*. She must have sunk instantaneously." (Extract from Report of Captain of *Tiger*.)

of our battle-cruisers as the target. She had the opportunity of inflicting as much damage as she could without interruption from our ships.

This regrettable omission undoubtedly went some way towards accounting for our losses; but the chief cause was the failure to co-ordinate the movements of the Fifth Battle Squadron to those of the battle-cruisers. Had the former been kept closed up or, better still, been stationed on a bearing where the enemy was most, and not least, likely to be met, the enemy would have been subjected to an overwhelming fire and would have been far less able to inflict on us such terrible losses. The value of the Fifth Battle Squadron was such that when they did open fire, even at extreme range, the enemy's fire "appeared to slacken".

In the meantime the flotillas had not been idle. At about 4.25 p.m. twelve of our destroyers made an attack; almost simultaneously the enemy destroyers moved out, but were forced to withdraw before their attack had been pressed home. They fired twelve torpedoes before retiring, however, which were avoided by the Fifth Battle Squadron by turning away two points, or 22°, for a few minutes. The enemy battle-cruisers were also forced to turn away to avoid the torpedoes fired by our destroyers, and the

German battle-cruiser *Seydlitz* was hit, but was able to remain in the line.

In these attacks the enemy lost the destroyers V 27 and V 29 and we lost the destroyers *Nomad* and *Nestor*, which, after being severely damaged, subsequently came under the fire of the enemy battle fleet and were sunk.

GERMAN BATTLE FLEET SIGHTED

The light cruiser *Southampton*, flagship of the Second Light Cruiser Squadron, sighted and reported the enemy battle fleet at 4.38 p.m., and at about the same time it was sighted from the *Lion*.

The definite news that the enemy battle fleet was at sea, and in a position to support its battle-cruisers, must have come as somewhat of a surprise to Jellicoe and Beatty in view of the message previously received from the Admiralty. If the enemy battle fleet was in the Jade River at 11.10 a.m., how did it arrive in its present position, about 180 miles from the Jade, by half-past four? The information derived from directional wireless sent from the Admiralty was in this case obviously incorrect.

The Admirals afloat would have had no idea how this incorrect information came to

be transmitted, but the mere fact that it was now proved beyond doubt to be incorrect would naturally lessen their subsequent reliance on information obtained by directional wireless, transmitted from the Admiralty.

On sighting the enemy battle fleet Beatty made a general signal, by flags, to turn 16 points—180°—in succession. The effect of the recent torpedo attack, which was the cause of the enemy battle-cruisers turning away, was now evident, as this turn of 16 points was made without any of our ships receiving damage by gunfire. The signal to turn, having been made by flags, was again not clear to the Fifth Battle Squadron, some miles astern. This squadron being, therefore, still on a southerly course rapidly approached our battle-cruisers, now steering to the northward.

The signal to turn was repeated, and immediately the *Lion* had passed, on her northerly course, the Fifth Battle Squadron turned up astern of the battle-cruisers. During this turn the Fifth Battle Squadron came under fire from the leading ships of the High Seas Battle Fleet, and some salvoes fell close to them. No ship was, however, hit during the turn, although the *Barham* was hit more than once a few minutes after turning. The German battle-cruisers turned to the northward a few minutes after our battle-cruisers.

The *Southampton*, meanwhile, had pressed on to within 13,000 or 14,000 yards of the head of the enemy line for the purpose of obtaining as accurate information as possible of the composition and disposition of the enemy battle fleet. This action shows that Commodore Goodenough was one of those who realized fully that the most important duty of the advanced cruisers is to obtain and transmit accurate information of the enemy battle fleet to the Commander-in-Chief. It will be seen that he kept this duty in mind throughout the entire battle.

THE RUN NORTH

Intermittent firing on a northerly course now took place. Our battle-cruisers lost sight of the enemy, and consequently ceased firing, at 5.12 p.m. The Fifth Battle Squadron, following about 2 miles astern of the *Lion*, however, continued to be hotly engaged with both enemy battle-cruisers and battleships. The *Barham* and *Valiant*, the two leading battleships, fired at the battle-cruisers at ranges of about 18,000 to 20,000 yards. The two rear ships, *Malaya* and *Warspite*, joined action with the head of the enemy battle fleet.

The superior gunnery of the Fifth Battle Squadron now began to show its effect. It is abundantly clear from German evidence

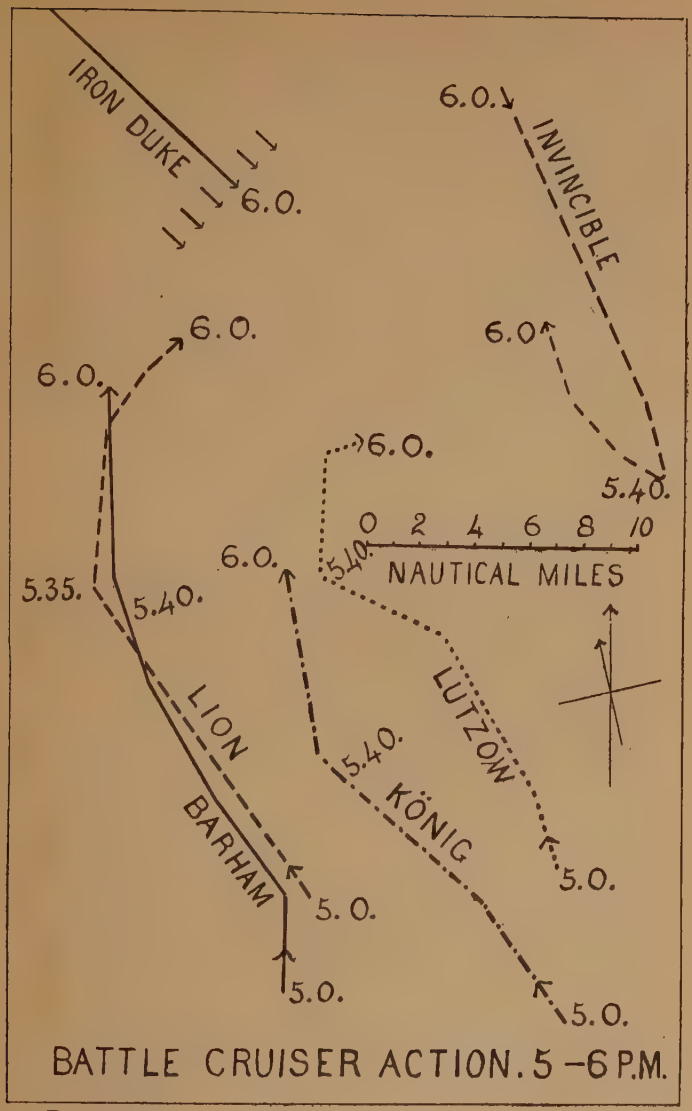
IRON DUKE
6.0.
6.0.
INVINCIBLE
6.0.
6.0.
6.0.
6.0.
5.40.
0 2 4 6 8 10
NAUTICAL MILES
6.0.
5.40.
5.35.
5.40.
LION
BARHAM
5.40.
LÜTZOW
KÖNIG
5.0.
5.0.
5.0.
5.0.
BATTLE CRUISER ACTION. 5 – 6 P.M.

DIAGRAM 4

that before this time little damage had been received by the enemy from the gunfire of the British battle-cruisers, except from that of *Queen Mary*, which ship appears to have obtained more hits than her consorts in the short time available before her regrettable loss. During this period, however, although the *Barham*, *Valiant* and *Malaya* received several hits, they inflicted damage on the German battle-cruisers and battleships. Our battle-cruisers opened fire again, for a few minutes, at 5.40 p.m., but, owing to decreasing visibility, the firing was only intermittent, at a range of about 17,000 yards.

While these actions were taking place the Third Battle Cruiser Squadron, which left Scapa Flow with the battle fleet, was, at 4.5 p.m., ordered by Jellicoe to proceed with the light cruisers *Chester* and *Canterbury* to support Beatty. Course was subsequently altered as necessary to close the *Lion*, but, owing to the uncertainty of the position of our battle-cruisers, the *Invincible* led the squadron too far to the eastward. At 5.36 p.m. the *Chester* sighted some enemy light cruisers of the Second Scouting Group and fire was opened on both sides. The *Chester* received severe damage from this superior force, and, after being under fire for nineteen minutes, was saved from further damage by Admiral Hood

leading the Third Battle-Cruiser Squadron between the *Chester* and the enemy.

At about 5.50 p.m. the *Lion* sighted the cruiser screen ahead of our battle fleet, and a few minutes later sighted the leading ships of the British battle fleet. This must have been a welcome sight to a sorely damaged squadron.

AN UNPALATABLE RESULT

Thus ended the battle-cruiser fleet action and, as Jellicoe said in his despatch, the "result cannot be other than unpalatable". Let us consider the first phase of this action, between the time of opening fire and the time of sighting the enemy battle fleet. We find that on the British side Beatty had under his command 4 battleships and 6 battle-cruisers against Hipper's 5 battle-cruisers. In light cruisers and destroyers Beatty was also numerically superior. In spite of this overwhelming preponderance of power, we lost two battle-cruisers, sunk by gunfire, while the enemy lost none. Considerably more damage was caused to our ships than they inflicted on the enemy. It *is* unpalatable—extremely unpalatable—but nevertheless an indisputable fact that, in this first phase of the battle, a British squadron, greatly superior in numbers and gun-power, not only failed

to defeat a weaker enemy who made no effort to avoid action, but, in the space of 50 minutes, suffered what can only be described as a partial defeat.

This regrettable result cannot be entirely explained away by the lack of armour protection of our battle-cruisers, the poor quality of the British shells, and the disadvantage under which, it is stated, our ships suffered after the first quarter of an hour in regard to light. The first of these factors certainly had considerable bearing on the total loss of our two ships, but does not account for the comparatively minor damage inflicted on the enemy. For this we must find other reasons, which were, without doubt, firstly, the delay in bringing the Fifth Battle Squadron into action, and, secondly, the inaccurate shooting of our battle-cruisers; which has been specially remarked on by the Germans.

The battle-cruisers and Fifth Battle Squadron had now, in spite of their difficulties and losses, gallantly led the enemy to within striking distance of the Grand Fleet. To those in the Battle-Cruiser Fleet it might, at the time, have seemed that nothing now remained but for Jellicoe to strike an annihilating blow. Defeat was not, however, to be changed to victory as easily as it appeared. In naval warfare a sweeping victory is the

exception and inconclusive actions the general rule. For a sweeping victory time and clear weather are essentials; but the atmospheric conditions alone would have prevented anything in the nature of a sweeping victory, and the late hour of meeting was all in favour of an enemy fleet bent on avoiding action.

CHAPTER V

THE MEETING OF THE FLEETS

IN Chapter III we left the British Battle Fleet steaming to the south-eastward at high speed, in their endeavour to support our battle-cruisers at the earliest possible moment, and ready to form into line of battle directly the advanced cruisers made contact.

It was of the utmost importance for Jellicoe to know, as accurately as possible, the position of the enemy battle fleet relative to his own position. It was also important for him to know from time to time the direction in which the enemy was steering. With this knowledge he would have been able, with some certainty, to forecast the bearing on which he would sight the enemy.

To form the battle fleet into line of battle —or in other words, to deploy—before reliable information of the enemy's position was obtained would have been the negation of sound tactics. An early deployment on insufficient information obviates any chance

of tactical advantage in deployment. An early deployment on reliable information is sound.

After deployment, provided deployment is judged correctly, the battle fleet should be steaming in a single line, in such a direction that all the guns of the main armament can be brought to bear on the enemy, with a good margin of training in reserve to allow for unavoidable minor miscalculations of the actual bearing of the enemy. It is also important that the deployment should be carried out as expeditiously as possible. To enable this to be done, it is an accepted axiom of tactics that the fleet should be formed into divisions, or columns, the bearing of the leaders of each column from one another being kept as nearly as possible at right angles to the bearing on which it is expected to sight the enemy. If this is done, the utmost flexibility is obtained and the actual deployment can be made in either direction without any unnecessary waste of time.

It is obvious, therefore, that, if possible, the deployment should be made in time for the whole battle fleet to be in line of battle shortly before the enemy is actually within gun range; which, in these days of long range, means shortly before the enemy is sighted.

It has long been considered that tactical advantage is gained by deploying outside the maximum range of the torpedoes of the enemy battleships. The effective range of the German torpedoes was about 15,000 yards, and the enemy battleships were superior to ours in torpedo armament.

Our gun armament, on the other hand, was superior to that of the enemy.

THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S NEED OF INFORMATION

If, therefore, Jellicoe was to get the best use out of his superior gun armament, and obviate any disadvantage due to the enemy's superior torpedo armament, it was desirable to deploy outside a range of 15,000 yards from the enemy battle fleet. To enable him to do this, timely and accurate information of the position and course of the enemy was all important; but, unfortunately, this was the very thing denied to the Commander-in-Chief. A ship in visual touch with the enemy, but out of sight of her Fleet Flagship, must, in reporting the enemy's position, also give her own geographical position (by latitude and longitude); the accuracy with which the Commander-in-Chief can then determine the relative bearing and distance from him of the enemy will depend upon the accuracy with

which the geographical positions of his flagship and the ship making the report are known. In the cloudy weather usually prevailing in the North Sea, especially when course and speed have to be continually altered in the presence of the enemy, it is too much to expect that any ship would know her geographical position with absolute accuracy. Small errors, some one way and some another, are usually cancelled if several reports are received. Hence the necessity of continuous and reliable reports.

The first definite information of the presence of the enemy battle fleet which reached Jellicoe was that sent by the *Southampton* at 4,38., which read:

"Have sighted enemy battle fleet bearing approximately S.E. Course of enemy North. My position Lat. 56° 34′ N., Long. 6° 20′ E. (1638)."

Several reports had, however, previously been received in the *Iron Duke* giving the position of the enemy battle-cruisers. Owing, however, to signalling, or ciphering errors, and also owing to the unavoidable errors in the dead-reckoning of the ships concerned, the position of the enemy relative to the *Iron Duke* must have been, to say the least, con-

jectural.[1] Between the time of sighting the enemy battle fleet and the time visual contact was made between our advanced forces and our battle fleet Jellicoe received four messages from the *Southampton*; one message from the *Champion*, which contained information that was obviously inaccurate; and one message from the *Lion*, which was sent at 4.45. p.m. This one message sent from the *Lion* was, unfortunately, mutilated in transmission. It should have read, "Have sighted enemy's battle fleet, bearing S.E. . . .". Owing to the *Lion's* wireless having been shot away,

[1] A few examples will illustrate the necessity of continuous reports being received if any tangible result is to be obtained by striking an average. At 3.38 p.m. the *Falmouth* reported her position, and at the same time reported that *Galatea* bore N.N.E. 2 miles from her. But at 3.35 p.m. the *Galatea* in a report gave her own position, which was over 8 miles from that reported by *Falmouth*.

The *Lion* reported her position at 3.35 p.m. and again at 3.50 p.m. The distance between these reported positions was $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, whereas the ship actually travelled 6·2 miles in the fifteen minutes' interval between these reports.

The positions of *Southampton* given in the signals made from that ship at 4.30 p.m. and at 4.38 p.m. indicated that she travelled 8 miles in eight minutes.

A wireless message from the Admiralty which was sent at 5 p.m. gave the position, course and speed of the enemy battle fleet at 4.9 p.m.; and a second message,

the message had to be passed through the battle-cruiser *Princess Royal*, which caused some delay, and when it was received by Jellicoe, twenty minutes later, it read: "26 to 30 battleships probably hostile bearing S.S.E. Steering S.E."

During the hour preceding the time at which visual contact was made, a period during which it was all-important for Jellicoe to receive accurate information, no ship of the advanced forces, except the *Southampton*, sent any message. This was partly due to the battle-cruisers having lost touch with the enemy battle fleet during the run North.

sent at 5.45 p.m., gave the position, course and speed of the enemy main force at 4.30 p.m. The position of the enemy given in these messages from the Admiralty was some 17 miles to the westward of that deduced from the *Southampton's* message and some 8 miles to the westward of that deduced from a message from the *Lion* at 4.45 p.m.

In each case it is estimated that the enemy was sighted at a distance of about 10 miles. It will be seen, therefore, that the position of the enemy differed by about 9 miles, according to which reckoning was taken as correct, *Lion's* or *Southampton's*. As a fact, the positions given in the Admiralty messages were approximately correct, but only one was received in time to be of use. Greater reliance would naturally, at this date, have been placed on positions given by ships in actual contact with the enemy than on positions obtained by directional wireless on shore, then in its infancy. Reciprocal directional wireless between ships did not then exist.

The Fifth Battle Squadron was, however, still in touch. In fact, two of these battleships were engaged in a gunnery duel with the leading German battleships, and authentic reports of the position of the enemy could have been sent at regular intervals, but no report was sent from this source. The vital importance of sending continuous information appears to have been appreciated only by the *Southampton*.

Under the circumstance, therefore, it is not surprising that Jellicoe was uncertain as to the bearing on which the enemy would be sighted. In his despatch he states:

"It was apparent on meeting that the reckoning of the Battle-Cruiser Fleet was about 12 miles to the Eastward of *Iron Duke's* reckoning. In consequence of this the enemy were sighted on the Starboard bow instead of ahead, and some twenty minutes earlier than was anticipated. . . ."

The difference in reckoning, on meeting, between the *Iron Duke* and the *Lion* was, in reality, about 10 miles. The *Iron Duke* was some 4 miles to the south-eastward of her reckoning and the *Lion* about 6 miles to the westward. Jellicoe would not, however, have formed his opinion entirely on the only message received by wireless from the *Lion*, after

the enemy battle fleet was sighted. In the messages sent from the *Southampton*, in which her position is given, that sent at 4.38 p.m. was 13 miles to the eastward of her correct position and those at 4.45 p.m. and 4.48 p.m. 6 and 9 miles respectively. These errors, if due to dead reckoning, should have been nearly constant. It is probable, therefore, that they were partly due to the other causes mentioned.

Jellicoe continues:

"Owing to the uncertainty as to the position of the enemy battle fleet, it had not been possible to redispose the guides of columns on any different bearing. Consequently the deployment was carried out under some disadvantage, and, indeed, it was not easy to determine the correct direction of deployment until the battle fleets were almost in contact."

We see, therefore, that although the rival battle fleets were rapidly closing one another and, although not in sight, were getting close to gun range, Jellicoe had no reliable information on which to deploy. If he deployed on such scanty information, he might give the enemy a great advantage; and again, if he waited for more news, he might find himself within gun and torpedo range without his fleet being deployed. In an endeavour to

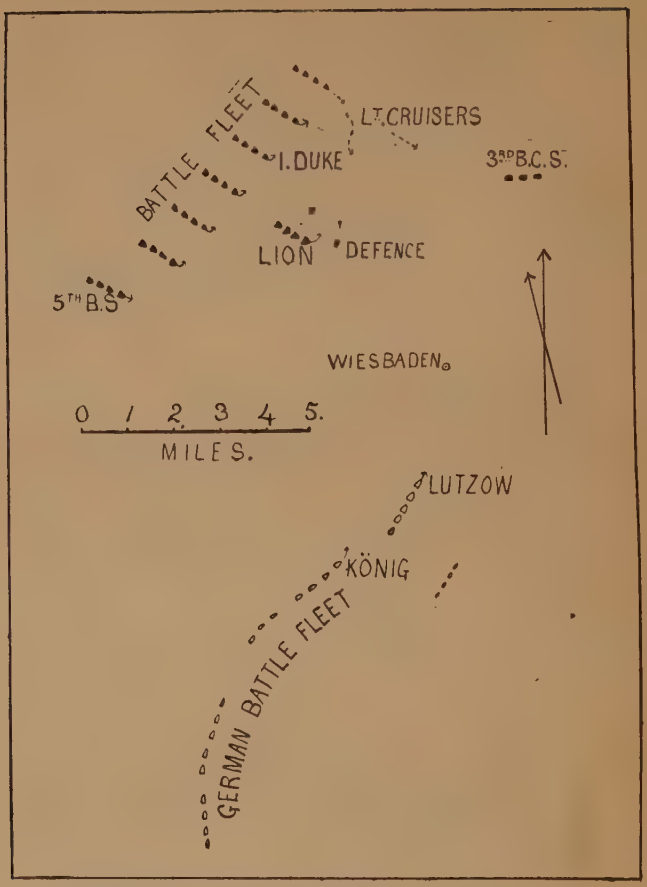

Diagram 5

The Situation at 6.14 p.m., May 31

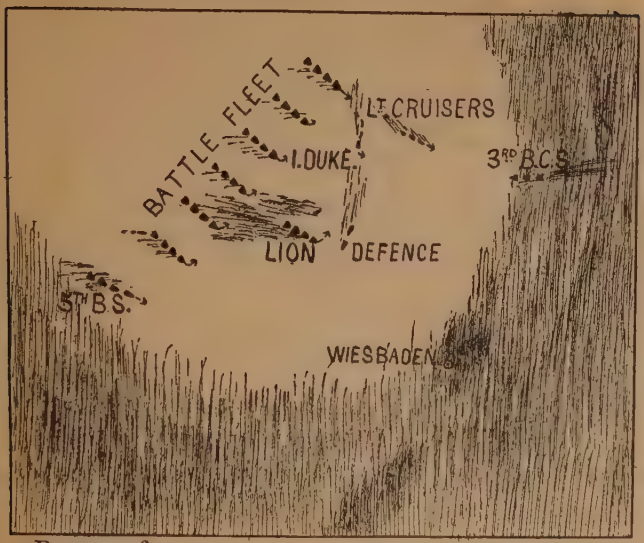

DIAGRAM 6

THE SITUATION AT 6.14 P.M., AS SEEN FROM THE *Iron Duke*, MAY 31

obtain some reliable information as to the whereabouts of the enemy Jellicoe made a visual signal to Beatty at 6.1 p.m.: "Where is enemy's battle fleet?" After waiting for some minutes without receiving any reply, a repetition of the signal was made at 6.10 p.m., and at 6.14 p.m. the reply was received: "Have sighted enemy's battle fleet bearing S.S.W."

JELLICOE'S DEPLOYMENT

There was now not a moment to spare, and Jellicoe still had no definite news of the course

the enemy was steering, but an immediate decision on his part was imperatively necessary. He decided to deploy on his port wing column, which was being led by the *King George V.* The signal ordering this movement was made at 6.15 p.m., one minute after the receipt of the signal from the *Lion.*

By way of comparison, it is interesting to note that at the Battle of Trafalgar there was a total of 71 ships engaged—at Jutland 260. At Trafalgar the main fleets were in sight of one another for several hours before the light wind enabled them to close to effective range at the speed of 2 to 3 miles an hour. At Jutland the fleets were closing at some 40 miles an hour.

Considerable uninformed criticism has been directed at the method of deployment adopted by Jellicoe. It has been described, incorrectly, by some critics as a deployment " away from the enemy ". Suggestions have been made that deployment should have been made on the starboard wing column or, by a somewhat complicated manœuvre which might have been misunderstood in the fleet, on a centre column. What, however, is the use of conjecture as to the relative advantages of other means of deployment when we must admit that the manœuvre, as ordered, was

understood by the whole fleet ; that it enabled our fleet to cross the enemy's "T", and placed our main force between the enemy and his base ? A deployment which achieved these results is above adverse criticism. It is difficult to understand how any other method of deployment could have attained a better result.

While the battle fleet was forming line of battle, the battle-cruisers were proceeding at full speed to take up their assigned station at the head of the battle fleet. Their smoke seriously hampered the view from many of the battleships, especially those at the head of the line. This, unfortunate though it was, was unavoidable, as no other action was possible.

At the time the signal for deployment was made it is unlikely that the enemy battle fleet, or any portion of it, had been sighted from our battle fleet. It is true that in some of the reports sent in by the Commanding Officers mention is made of enemy battleships having been sighted before this time, but it is considered most probable that, owing to the mist and smoke-haze, friends were mistaken for enemy, or cruisers for battleships. It is certain, however, that neither Scheer, in the enemy battle fleet, or von Hipper, in his battle-cruisers, had sighted or located our

battle fleet at this time. In fact, Scheer had only recently suspected our battle fleet was anywhere in the vicinity. Scheer's appreciation of the situation, shortly after this, was that our battle fleet was in single line, heading to the south-eastward and stretched well to the southward across his course. The misty weather had, obviously, misled him and a glimpse of the *Invincible*, leading the Third Battle-Cruiser Squadron, had been mistaken for the van of our battle fleet. This led him to believe that our battle fleet was a good deal farther advanced than it really was.

CHAPTER VI

GENERAL FLEET ACTION

THE action between the battle fleets commenced immediately the signal for deployment had been hauled down, but firing was not general, mainly owing to the mist and smoke and partly owing to the masking of the enemy by our own ships. The reports from Flag and Commanding Officers, in several cases, make mention of the difficulty in obtaining a clear range, and a close study of these reports shows a considerable amount of masking occurred. This would appear to have been unavoidable, considering that all our detached and outlying squadrons were at this time converging on the battle fleet; and that the battle-cruisers were passing between our fleet and the enemy as they strained to get to the head of the line. The Sixth Division—the rear division of the battle line—was the first to come into action. As the battleship *Hercules* started to turn into line of battle she was straddled, that is to

say, shots of a salvo from the enemy fell, some short of, and some over, her; but she was not hit. Splashes from salvoes like these reached as high as the foretop. The enemy's shells were also falling close to the battleships *Vanguard* and *Revenge*.

At this time the German light cruiser *Wiesbaden*, which had been severely damaged when in action with the battle-cruiser *Invincible*, was lying, apparently stopped, and on fire, in a favourable position as a target for any of our battleships which could not, at the moment, see any enemy capital ship to open fire on. She was engaged, and hit, by several of our ships, and, as the reports mention that shots which apparently came from the enemy ships were also falling close to the *Wiesbaden*, it is probable that this unfortunate ship was being fired on by her friends as well as her foes. She was also hit by a torpedo fired by the destroyer *Onslow*, and finally sank.

As our battle fleet started to deploy, the *Defence* and *Warrior*, which had been engaging enemy light cruisers, crossed so close ahead of the *Lion* that the battle-cruisers' course had to be altered to clear them. These two armoured cruisers then found themselves within comparatively close range of the heavy ships of the enemy. They were immediately

subjected to a very heavy concentrated fire, which in a minute or two was the cause of the *Defence* being blown up and sunk. The *Warrior* also received severe damage, but was able to withdraw from the battle. She would probably have suffered the same fate as the *Defence* but for the battleship *Warspite*, which, owing to her helm having jammed, described an involuntary circle between the *Warrior* and the enemy, thereby receiving many of the hits which were intended for the other ship. The *Warrior* was subsequently taken in tow by the seaplane carrier *Engadine*, but sank before reaching home, while the *Warspite* took no further part in the battle and was eventually ordered back to harbour.

The *Marlborough*, flying the flag of Admiral Burney, second-in-command of the Grand Fleet, leading the Sixth Division of Battleships, opened fire at 6.17 p.m., followed after a few minutes by the *Revenge*, and as the range cleared the ships ahead were able to come into action. The enemy battle fleet was at this time steering to the north-eastward.

BATTLE FLEETS IN ACTION

The situation at 6.26 p.m., a few minutes after the deployment commenced, is seen in

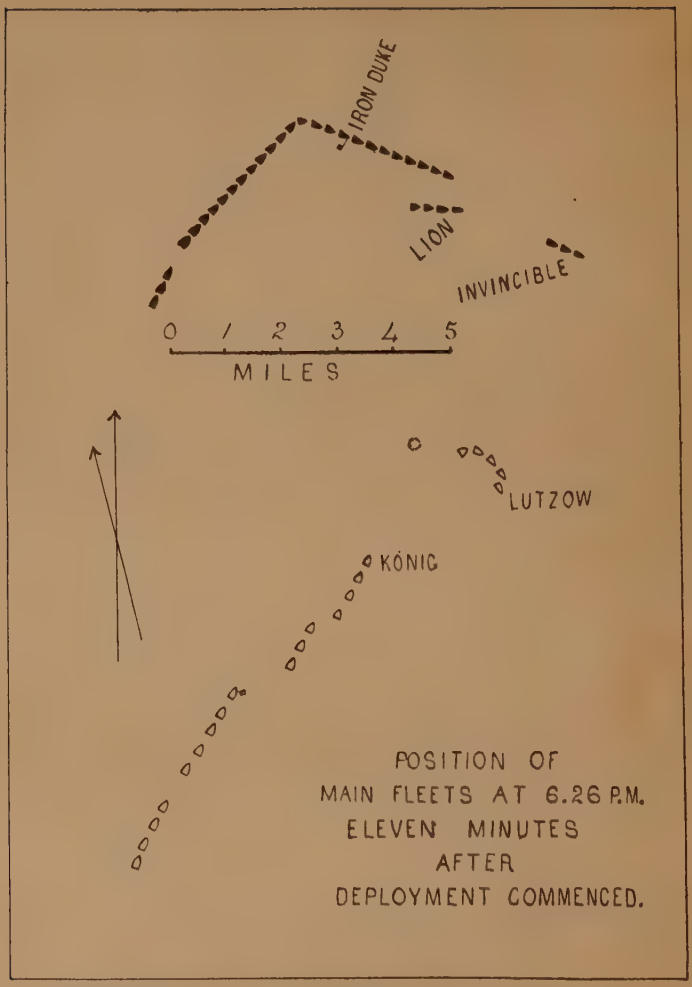
IRON DUKE
LION
INVINCIBLE
0 1 2 3 4 5
MILES
LUTZOW
KÓNIG
POSITION OF
MAIN FLEETS AT 6.26 P.M.
ELEVEN MINUTES
AFTER
DEPLOYMENT COMMENCED.

DIAGRAM 7

Diagram No. 7. This shows our battle fleet, in one line, leading round to the south-eastward. Our battle-cruisers are trying to get to the head of the line and the Third Battle-Cruiser Squadron is in action with the enemy battle-cruisers. It became necessary to reduce the speed of the battle fleet in order to allow the battle-cruisers to get clear, and thus give a better chance to the battleships to obtain a clear range. As the battle-cruisers drew ahead the general situation became somewhat plainer to Jellicoe, although it was yet far from clear. He realized, however, that the moment had come when he could probably inflict severe damage on the enemy, and, at 6.29 p.m., he signalled for the course to be altered, by sub-divisions, to S.S.E., to bear down on the enemy. But this signal had to be cancelled for two reasons. Firstly, there was some bunching up of our ships in the rear divisions, caused by the enforced reduction of speed to allow the battle-cruisers to draw ahead, and consequently the rear-most ships had not yet turned to the new course. Secondly, because the battle-cruisers were rapidly converging on the head of our line, which would have prevented the *King George V*, the leading battleship, from closing the enemy. This passage across the front of the battle fleet, to which Beatty was

unavoidably committed, marred to some extent a very promising opening of the general action, and prevented full advantage being taken by Jellicoe of his position. At the moment of deployment, when the rear divisions were nearest the enemy, they were being masked by the battle-cruisers, and later on, as the head of our line came into a suitable position to inflict damage, it was prevented from doing so.

By 6.30 p.m. all the divisions of the battle fleet, except the First Division, had come into action. The view from the First Division was still obscure.

At the head of the line the *Invincible*, leading the Third Battle-Cruiser Squadron, had just turned to take station ahead of the First Battle Cruiser Squadron, and was heavily engaged with the enemy, when, at 6.34 p.m., she was badly hit, blew up and sank.[1]

[1] Investigations made in 1919 led to the belief that, as stated previously, both the *Iron Duke* and the *Lion* were somewhat out in their reckoning. It was therefore decided to locate, and fix the position of, the wreck of the *Invincible*; this wreck being a definite point in the battle area. Ascertaining the position of this wreck would once and for all determine the exact geographical position of the action, and would enable the position of any other ship to be deduced with considerable accuracy at any stage of the action. The wreck was, therefore, searched for, located, and the position fixed.

Owing to the concentrated fire of many of our battleships, assisted by that of the battle-cruisers, the enemy suffered appreciable damage at this time. The enemy battle-cruisers suffered most, in fact, the *Lutzow* was so badly damaged that von Hipper was compelled to shift his flag. His first attempt was to board the *Seydlitz*, but as this ship was also badly damaged he went to the *Moltke*. The major portion of the damage incurred by them was, undoubtedly, inflicted after our battle fleet came into action. The fact that little damage was done to these ships before this explains, to a certain extent, the severe losses incurred in the sinking of the *Indefatigable* and the *Queen Mary*, and the considerable damage done to the *Lion*, which nearly resulted in her loss. The shooting of the enemy during this early stage was good, but it fell off later, and it was an established fact that the German gunnery efficiency showed a rapid decline as soon as our ships established hitting.

Several of the enemy battleships also suffered damage at this time. The *Konig*, at the head of the line, probably received greater damage from gunfire than any other enemy battleship.

THE FIRST GERMAN RETREAT

Scheer, to whom the situation was still obscure, now found himself becoming enveloped by our fleet. The British battle-cruisers, having reached the head of the line, were fine on his starboard bow and a great line of ships stretched across his track. Owing to Jellicoe's well-directed deployment, his "T" was practically crossed and his position was a desperate one. To escape from this predicament he made the famous "Battle turn away", of the Germans, with his whole fleet. This manœuvre was designed to enable his weaker fleet to get out of a tight corner. To gain time, and to enable the "turn away" to be made without considerable risk, a smoke-screen was put up by the enemy destroyers and, it is stated, a torpedo attack was also launched against our battle line. It seems more probable that the enemy destroyer flotilla was making an endeavour to reach the damaged *Wiesbaden* to rescue her crew, but on encountering the heavy fire directed on them by our battleships they were forced to retire. Six torpedoes were discharged at the rear of our battle line, but none hit, nor did this attack cause Jellicoe to deflect from his course.

Although the smoke-screen had prevented

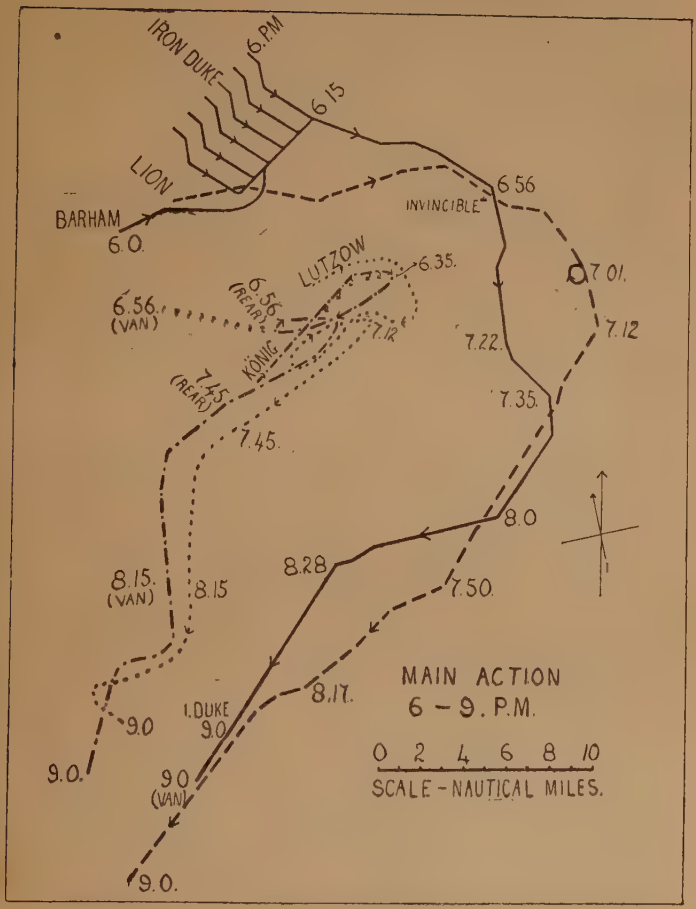

DIAGRAM 8

MAY 31

Jellicoe from seeing the enemy's movements, it very soon became apparent to him that they must have turned away. There is no direct answer to the "Battle turn away" except a stern chase on the part of the stronger fleet, and a stern chase under such conditions would have been accompanied by risks which no prudent admiral could accept. As we saw in Chapter II, a turn to follow the enemy directly would have placed our battle fleet in a position of great tactical disadvantage. It would have laid our ships open to attacks by torpedo from the German battleships, and also their destroyers, both of which would have been in the best possible position for this purpose. The menace of floating mines, dropped from the German battleships, would also have had to be accepted, as also would the possible danger from submarines. Our battle fleet had very slight superiority in speed over the enemy. A chase, therefore, would have been a long chase, with little hope of overtaking the enemy before dark, and some probability of losing the advantage, already gained, of being between the enemy and his base.

In clear weather the difficulty might have been met by dividing our fleet and despatching fast squadrons to harass his flanks; but, even so, the day was somewhat too far

advanced to render this desirable. In the misty weather prevailing, and with so few hours of daylight remaining, such tactics had little to commend them owing to the difficulty of co-ordination between squadrons separated from one another.

BEATTY FAILS TO REGAIN TOUCH

Since there was nothing to indicate to Jellicoe, within a wide arc, the direction in which the enemy had retired, he took the only action possible which, at this time, might lead to ultimate victory. At 6.44 he turned the battle fleet to south-east, this being the best course to ensure getting fair between the enemy and his base, and at the same time to close the enemy obliquely for the purpose of renewing the action. Our battle-cruisers, whose main duty now was reconnaissance, also altered course to south-east and later to S.S.E. These alterations did not again bring the German ships into view, but Beatty did not turn farther in their direction. In his despatch he states: ". . . caution forbade me to close the range too much with my inferior force." This statement does not refer definitely to any particular time, so may be assumed to be his general policy. Beatty's "reconnaissance force" was now

six battle-cruisers against the enemy's four; in this respect, therefore, Beatty had superior force. He also had ample superiority in speed to regain touch with the enemy and to ensure a safe retreat on our battle fleet without undue risk to his command.

Owing to the turn away of the enemy battle fleet, fire between the opposing capital ships ceased for a while. Ten minutes after altering course to the South-east the course of our battle fleet was again altered to starboard, to South, to close the supposed position of the enemy more directly.

At 6.54 p.m. the *Marlborough* was struck by a torpedo, which was probably fired by the damaged *Weisbaden*. She was able, however, to keep her place in the line for several hours, although her maximum speed was considerably reduced. At about this time our battle fleet passed the wreck of the *Invincible*, the Third and Fourth Divisions passing her one on either hand, the wreck being clearly visible with the bow and stern standing up out of the water, showing that the ship had been broken in two by the explosion, the midship parts resting on the bottom.[1]

[1] The next day the two halves had subsided, and no sign of the wreck was visible on the surface of the water.

SCHEER BLUNDERS INTO OUR BATTLE FLEET

Scheer, having extricated himself from his perilous position by his precipitate retreat and by standing to the westward for some minutes, turned again to the eastward. For all his protestations, it is unbelievable that he did this for the purpose of renewing the action. What is probable is that he had been misled, owing to the mist and smoke, as to the actual position of our battle fleet at about 6.35 p.m., and thought they were farther to the southward than was the case. It seems probable, too, that he was of opinion that if he now turned back to the eastward he might succeed in crossing astern of our fleet, thereby not only getting into a more favourable position as regards his own base, but, in the event of a renewal of the action, getting the advantage of light towards sunset. No other explanation of Scheer's tactics, at this time, appears reasonable. A capable leader and skilled tactician, as Scheer undoubtedly was, would not purposely have headed his fleet directly towards the centre of the arc formed by our battle fleet, thus bringing his leading squadrons under the concentrated fire of practically all our battleships, which is what happened.

At 6.54 p.m. Jellicoe, having had no report

of the position of the enemy from his van ships, realized that the enemy battle fleet could not yet be heading for home, so he turned his fleet to south.

Commodore Goodenough, in the *Southampton*, who had previously sent so many reports of the position of the enemy battle fleet, made yet another effort to locate it. At about 7 p.m. he turned his squadron to the southward from his position near the rear of our battle line, and again located and reported the enemy, coming under heavy fire as he did so.

No firing was now taking place between the main fleets, the enemy being out of sight of all our battleships, and also of our battle-cruisers, which were at this time some 6 miles on the port bow of the *Iron Duke*, and farther from the enemy than the Fleet Flagship. Beatty had gone on at high speed and lost touch with what was happening. Owing to the decreasing visibility, he would not have seen the battle fleet hauling round towards the enemy, but all signals for alteration of course, made from the *Iron Duke*, were sent out by wireless, so would have reached the battle-cruisers. He now reduced speed to 18 knots and began to circle to starboard to close the battle fleet. A complete circle was made by the *Lion*, the *Princess Royal*,

Tiger and *New Zealand* following her round. Immediately after the completion of this turn the battle-cruisers *Inflexible* and *Indomitable*, which had been keeping ahead of the *Lion*, took station in line astern.[1]

[1] An element of mystery has always been made about this turn, though why the battle-cruisers should not turn through 360°, if so desired, is not clear. They were not in action. No possible danger of any collision would be involved. With the firm belief that submarines were about, evidenced by a wireless report made by Beatty at 6.54 p.m., one minute before the turn was commenced, that one had been sighted, it would naturally be undesirable to reduce speed to any great extent. To get within visual touch of the battle fleet without delay would have necessitated a very large reduction in the speed, unless course was also altered. What more natural, therefore, than to turn and, having turned nearly 180° before realizing that there was no necessity to continue any farther to the northward, to resume the original course as quickly as possible ? The quickest method of doing this, having turned nearly 180°, would obviously be to continue the turn through 360°. This matter is not one which can be swept aside as of no importance, if accuracy in plotting the ship's tracks is required. The *Lion*, having turned through 360°, was, after about eleven minutes, in the same position as when the turn was commenced, whereas if she had made any other form of turn the position would not have been the same.

Referring to Battle of Jutland—Official Despatches (Comd. 1068), we find, in Plate 10, Track of *Lion*, which is signed by the Vice-Admiral commanding battle-cruiser fleet himself, this turn shown as a circle. Again, in

THE SECOND GERMAN RETREAT

At 7.10 p.m. the head of the enemy fleet again came into sight from some of our battleships, and fire was immediately opened on the head of his battleship line by the

Plate 31, showing the track of the *New Zealand*, it is conspicuously shown. In the report of the Captain of the *Lion* it is stated that "ship continued to circle to starboard", and in the report from *New Zealand* we find, "commenced to circle to starboard" and "gradually circling round to starboard". In the *Official History* Sir J. Corbett, who had, besides the above evidence, the evidence of the ships' logs at his disposal, states definitely that the turn was made. It is common knowledge that a good deal of discussion among those concerned took place on this point shortly after the battle, and also at other, more recent, times. In view of this overwhelming weight of evidence it is difficult to understand the reason for showing this turn on Chart 8*a*—Official Despatches—as a turn to starboard followed by a turn to port. This chart, which is also signed by Admiral Beatty, is stated to be of a date 17th July 1916. It is, however, of little value as evidence owing to the obvious errors it contains. The geographical positions of the *Lion* do not agree with those given in her cipher messages reporting the position of the enemy, and the ranges of the enemy are at variance with those given in the gunnery records of the battle-cruisers. The position of the *Lion* at 7.15 p.m., for example, is shown as about 5,000 yards on the starboard bow of the *Iron Duke*, that is, nearer the enemy, whereas, in reality, she was about 8,000 yards on the *Iron Duke's* port bow, or farther from the enemy.

Marlborough and her division, and on the enemy battle-cruisers by the Fifth Division. At this time the range was as low as 9,000 yards in some cases. In a very short time practically the whole of our battle fleet was engaged, at ranges varying from 11,000 to 14,000 yards ; but owing to the poor visibility organized concentration of fire was impossible. The enemy, especially his battle-cruisers, again received severe damage from our battleships. Some of our battle-cruisers also came into action again for a few minutes, but at a somewhat greater range.

Jellicoe had again secured a position of immense tactical advantage, having fairly crossed the enemy's " T ", and only the poor visibility saved the German fleet from suffering an overwhelming defeat there and then.

As soon as the action was resumed Scheer realized that his position was an impossible one, and that his passage to the eastward was barred. Only one chance was his, and he took it. His flotillas were ordered to attack and put up smoke-screens. His battle-cruisers were ordered to " Charge the enemy. Ram. Without regard to consequences ", and his battle fleet was again ordered to make the " Battle turn away ". The manœuvre was successfully accomplished and the whole enemy fleet once more retired from the scene

of action. This move on the part of the enemy was, again, not clear to Jellicoe, owing to the smoke screen.

ENEMY TORPEDOES ELUDED

At 7.22 p.m. the Eleventh Half-Flotilla of German Destroyers was observed to fire torpedoes and three minutes later the Seventeenth Half-Flotilla—twenty-one enemy torpedoes were fired in all. Immediately after launching this attack the enemy destroyers turned away and disappeared in a smoke-screen. Ten minutes later a further attack was made by the Third and Fifth Flotillas of the enemy. This attack, however, was largely frustrated by a counter-attack on the part of our Fourth Light Cruiser Squadron.

When the torpedoes were fired, Jellicoe, at 7.22 p.m., in accordance with established custom, turned the battle fleet away 2 points, by sub-divisions; and after an interval of three minutes, when calculations showed that this turn would not be sufficient to avoid the torpedoes, he ordered a further turn of 2 points. The result of this manœuvre was that, although several torpedoes were seen by our battleships, not one hit.

In his despatch Jellicoe states:

"The torpedo attacks launched by the

enemy were countered in the manner previously intended and practised during exercises . . ."

The torpedo attack, as an attack, failed; but the smoke-screen developed by the enemy destroyers was so far effective that it prevented Jellicoe from knowing the extent of the turn away of the enemy battle fleet.

Having avoided the torpedoes, he therefore turned our battle fleet to S. by W., 5 points towards the enemy. Without knowing the position of the enemy it would have been unwise to turn more than this, as he might have lost his position between the enemy and his base.

At 7.45 p.m. our battle fleet was again turned, to south-west towards the enemy, and at 8 p.m. to west. During this time, while course was being gradually altered to the westward, the enemy battle fleet was out of sight of our battle fleet. The signals received by Jellicoe during this time are not easy to understand.

THE "FOLLOW ME" INCIDENT

At 7.40 p.m. our battle cruisers, having drawn ahead, had again lost touch with our battle fleet. The *Lion* was actually only $5\frac{1}{4}$ miles distant from the leading battleship,

but, owing to poor visibility, was not in sight of her. Beatty, however, at this time remarks that the visibility had improved to the westward, and he signalled by wireless to Jellicoe to say: "Enemy bears from me N.W. by W. distant 10 to 11 miles." The visibility must, therefore, have been very variable.

Again, at 7.45 p.m. Beatty signalled: "Leading enemy battleship bears N.W. by W. Course about S.W." This makes it appear that the visibility to the north-westward was sufficiently good to judge the approximate course of a ship at a distance of about 11 miles.

Owing, however, to the *Lion* not being in sight of our battle fleet, which was now only 6 miles to the northward, this visual signal had to be passed through an intermediate ship, the armoured cruiser *Minotaur*. No mention is found in the reports from the other battle-cruisers that the enemy was in sight at this time, and in the report from the Captain of the *Lion* we find, under 7.32 p.m.: "The enemy was still not sufficiently visible to open fire, and this continued until 8.21 p.m. . . ."

At 7.50 p.m. Beatty made the following signal by wireless to the Commander-in-Chief:

"Submit van of battleships follow battle-cruisers. We can then cut off whole of enemy's battle fleet."

Considerable prominence has been given to this signal in the Press; more especially was this the case immediately after the publication of the official despatches. It may, therefore, be equitable to refer to it in some detail.

As our battle fleet was not in sight from the *Lion*, it is not clear how Beatty could know in what direction it was then steering. This could have been quickly ascertained by a visual signal to one of the ships bridging the gap. Such a signal was made by Beatty at 8.15 p.m., so why not at 7.50 p.m. also? Again, it is not clear what "cutting off" is referred to. There is no suggestion that part of the enemy could be cut off from the main force, but that the whole battle fleet could be cut off. Presumably, therefore, it refers to cutting the enemy off from his base. The position, course and speed of our battle fleet could not have been improved upon for this purpose. As a fact, at the time the signal originated the van of the battle fleet was steering the same course as the *Lion*; was practically following the battle-cruisers—if anything, the van was a little on the *Lion's*

starboard quarter—and it was also nearer the enemy than was the *Lion*. An alteration in the course, to follow the battle-cruisers, at the moment the signal was made would, therefore, have caused the van to converge less on the enemy's course than it was actually doing.

The message sent was, therefore, quite unnecessary, and likely to mislead the Commander-in-Chief.

This cipher message, which was timed 7.50 p.m., was received in the *Iron Duke* at 7.54 p.m., and must have led Jellicoe, who would not have seen it until it had been deciphered some minutes later, to conclude that the battle-cruisers, which he could not see, were steering a very different course to that of the battle fleet. Jellicoe at once signalled to the *King George V*, the van ship, to follow the battle-cruisers, and this order was received by Admiral Jerram at 8.7 p.m.

Meanwhile, at 8 p.m., the battle fleet had altered course to west, 4 more points towards the enemy. The signal for this alteration was made by flags, and also by wireless, so it would be received without delay by all ships. The battle-cruisers did not, however, turn at once but, for the next quarter of an hour, continued on a south-west course. They then altered course to west, towards

the enemy, conforming to the movement of the battle fleet. The receipt of the signal to follow the battle-cruisers must have puzzled Jerram, because they were not in sight from the *King George V.* They could not be on his starboard side, because our battle fleet was in that direction, and any alteration to port would have led the First Division of the battle fleet farther from the enemy. Jerram, therefore, did the best thing possible and continued on his course.

CONTACT REGAINED, BUT THE ENEMY RETREATS AT ONCE

At 8 p.m. Beatty ordered the First and Third Light Cruiser Squadrons to sweep to the westward and locate the head of the enemy's line before dark. The Third Light Cruiser Squadron, after being in action with some enemy cruisers, located the enemy battle-cruisers and, at 8.46 p.m., reported their position. Before, however, this report was made, our battle-cruisers had, almost immediately after turning to west, sighted what appeared to be two battle-cruisers and some battleships, and at 8.23 p.m. fire was opened on them. At this time the enemy's main battle fleet, led by the battleship *Westfalen*, was steering a southerly course, with their

battle-cruisers on the port bow and the Second Squadron of pre-Dreadnought battleships on the starboard bow.

Immediately our battle-cruisers opened fire the enemy battle-cruisers turned away to the westward; but the Second Squadron of old battleships, which now came into action for the first time, held on their course. The action lasted only for a few minutes before this squadron also turned away.

At 8.28 p.m. the course of our battle fleet was altered to south-west. The enemy at this time was bearing about west from the *Iron Duke*, and it was necessary for our battle fleet to alter course to port to prevent the enemy from passing ahead, and thus attaining an improved strategical position. By 8.40 p.m. the enemy had completely disappeared from sight from our battle-cruisers and was not seen again by them.

It is of interest that, at 8.40 p.m., all our battle-cruisers and some of the ships of the First and Third Light Cruiser Squadrons report feeling a shock, as if struck by a mine or torpedo. The reports are so definite that it is undeniable that some severe explosion occurred at this time. No satisfactory explanation of the cause of a shock of such magnitude can be given. The only explosion reported as having been seen at this time

was seen from the light cruiser *Calliope*. It is possible that this was the enemy battleship *Markgraf* being hit by a torpedo, but *Markgraf* was some 8 miles from our battle-cruisers. It is practically certain that no submarine was in the vicinity.

Jellicoe received information of the whereabouts of the enemy, at about 8.40 p.m., from the light cruiser *Comus*, and shortly after this from the *Falmouth* and also from the *Southampton*.

This information, confirmed by a message sent from the *Lion* at 8.40 p.m. and received in the *Iron Duke* at 8.59 p.m., made the situation plain enough for Jellicoe to decide on his movements during the night. It was now getting dark, as sunset was at 8.7 p.m. and there was no moonlight during the dark hours.

THE PROBLEM OF THE NIGHT

Although darkness was now approaching, the problem of Jutland was by no means completed. It was, in fact, only beginning. With no more than three hours of daylight remaining after the main fleets met, it would have required more than a genius to ensure a decisive victory, against an enemy who was persistently endeavouring to avoid action, in the conditions of visibility then prevailing.

The actions before dark on 31st May must be considered, therefore, to be in the nature of preliminary skirmishes, of necessity curtailed owing to the late hour in the day at which the fleets met.

The real problem which then faced Jellicoe was, how to make as certain as human brain could make it that the enemy main fleet would be brought to action as early as possible after daylight the following morning.

The proceedings, and incidents, during the night cannot, therefore, be dismissed as subsidiary to the main problem, but should be as carefully and fully studied as any of the actions during daylight on 31st May.

CHAPTER VII

THE NIGHT

AT 9.1 p.m. the battle fleet was turned to south and subsequently assumed night-cruising formation.

At 9.27 the destroyer flotillas were ordered to take station 5 miles astern of the battle fleet. The course of the battle fleet was signalled to Beatty, and at 9.30 p.m. the battle-cruisers, then about 12 miles on the starboard bow of the *Iron Duke*, also altered course to south. The *Marlborough*, being now unable to maintain the speed of the fleet, 17 knots, owing to her damage, had dropped somewhat astern with her sub-division.

Jellicoe, in his despatch, states :

" I rejected at once the idea of a night action between the heavy ships as leading to possible disaster owing, first, to the presence of torpedo craft in such large numbers, and, secondly, to the impossibility of distinguishing between our own and enemy vessels. Further, the result of a night action

under modern conditions must always be very largely a matter of pure chance. . . . I therefore decided to steer to the southward, where I should be in position to renew the engagement at daylight, and should also be favourably placed to intercept the enemy should he make for his base by steering for Heligoland or towards the Ems and thence along the North German coast. . . ."

Beatty, in his despatch, states:

". . . I assumed that the enemy were to the north-westward, and that we had established ourselves between him and his base. . . . In view of the gathering darkness and for other reasons, viz. (*a*) our distance from the battle fleet; (*b*) the damaged condition of the battle-cruisers; (*c*) the enemy being concentrated; (*d*) the enemy being accompanied by numerous destroyers; (*e*) our strategical position being such that it appeared certain that we should locate the enemy at daylight under most favourable circumstances, I did not consider it proper or desirable to close the enemy battle fleet during the dark hours. . . ."

JELLICOE'S STRATEGY

We see that both Jellicoe and Beatty decided against a night action between

capital ships and also that they both considered the position strategically good for intercepting the enemy.

There were three routes which had to be considered: the northern one by Horns Reef; the southern one near the Frisian Coast and an intermediate one approaching Heligoland from the westward.

Beatty placed his battle-cruisers well ahead to ensure that the enemy could not pass round the southern flank of the battle fleet, which it would have to do if either of the southern channels was to be used.

The destroyer flotillas, being stationed astern, not only acted as a security for the battle fleet against attack by light craft from astern, but also as a menace to the enemy battle fleet if it attempted to cross astern. By massing them astern, Jellicoe also minimized the chance of "regrettable incidents" with our own battleships; likewise they were in a convenient position for rejoining when the fleet turned to the northward at daylight.

All the three routes could not be guarded against with any certainty. The disposition certainly made the two southern routes as secure as possible, but even with the destroyers astern, the three submarines which

had left Harwich on the evening of 30th May in position near the Horns Reef Passage before daylight on 1st June,[1] and the additional precaution of sending the *Abdiel* to lay mines in that passage, there was an offchance that the enemy might cross astern without being detected and brought to action by our battle fleet at daylight. The chance was a small one, but it existed.[2]

The remote possibility of the enemy turning to the northward after dark, and making for the Skagerrak, does not appear to have been considered, neither does Scheer mention this possible alternative. Such a course could only have been successful if the movement

[1] The three submarines sent to positions in the Horns Reef Passage did not, as it transpired, act as a menace to the safe return of the High Seas Fleet by this route. Their stations were assigned to them before it was known that the present operation was being undertaken. Their instructions were to lie on the bottom until 2nd June. The sudden change in the situation was not transmitted to them before leaving Harwich, at 7 p.m. on 30th May, although there seems no reason why this should not have been done. They, therefore, carried out their original orders and remained quietly below the surface, thereby missing a good opportunity of inflicting severe damage on the retreating enemy.

[2] The possibility of the enemy crossing astern of the fleet and, although detected, not being reported would not, of course, occur to anyone.

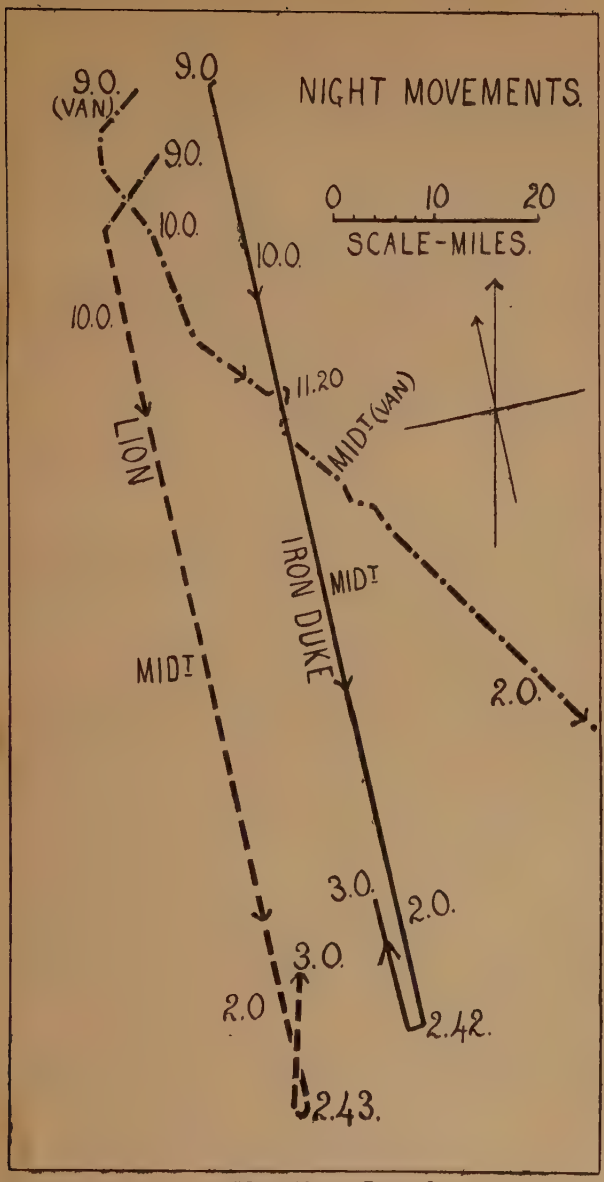

DIAGRAM 9 - MAY 31 TO JUNE 1

was undetected until too late to allow our ships to overtake him.

SCHEER EDGES TOWARDS HOME

The enemy battle fleet, which had altered course to the southward at about 8 p.m., began hauling over to the westward at about 8.30 p.m., when attacked by the Fourth Light Cruiser Squadron, resuming their southerly course at about 8.50 p.m.

This general direction was maintained until about 9.40 p.m., except on two occasions when they hauled to the westward, for a few minutes, owing to having sighted our ships.

After 9.30 p.m. the German battle squadrons proceeded in the order: First Squadron, Fleet Flagship, Third Squadron, Second Squadron, the *Westfalen* leading the line.[1] Before this time the Second Squadron was in the van.

At about 9.5 p.m. some ships believed to be enemy battle-cruisers were sighted by the light cruisers *Royalist* and *Caroline*, and also by the *Castor* and some of the Eleventh Flotilla. Some doubt existed as to the identity of these vessels. The Vice-Admiral commanding Second Battle Squadron, in his report, states:

". . . about 9 p.m. I negatived an attack

[1] See Appendix for details.

with whitehead torpedoes ordered by *Caroline* as I was certain that the vessels seen on our starboard beam were our own battle-cruisers . . . shortly afterwards I told *Caroline* to attack if he was quite certain they were enemy ships as he was in a better position to see them than I was, but I do not know whether an attack was made. If they were enemy ships and no attack was made, the fault is mine, and not that of *Caroline*."

This incident, occurring as it did at dusk, but before darkness had actually set in, indicates that Jellicoe was correct in saying it would be impossible to distinguish our own ships from the enemy ships during the night. Another incident further emphasizes this point.

At about 10 p.m., when on the starboard quarter of the battle fleet, three or more cruisers were sighted on the starboard bow of the *Castor*. These ships belonged to the Second Scouting Group. According to the report from the *Castor*, these ships challenged her by making the first two signs of the secret challenge of the day. When about 2,500 yards away the two leading ships switched on searchlights and opened fire on the *Castor*, who returned the fire. Two of the eight destroyers following the *Castor* fired torpedoes,

but others believed that, in spite of the gunfire, the ships opposed to them were our own ships, so they decided not to fire their torpedoes.

The *Castor's* report continues:

"It is unfortunate that this element of doubt existed in the minds of the Captains of the destroyers as to whether the ships were enemy, as a good opportunity of firing torpedoes was lost."

INDISCREET SIGNALLING

In regard to this element of doubt, which would naturally be caused if a strange ship was seen to make the secret challenge of the day, or even part of it, correctly, the *Castor's* report states:

"I would mention that some ship ahead of the Second Battle Squadron at about 9 p.m. made the signal by searchlight: 'Please give me the Challenges and Replies for the day, as I have lost mine.' I did not see a reply made, but evidently the signal was taken in by one of our ships, and the Captain of the *Manners* informs me he saw the reply being made. It is possible that this was one of the enemy's ships asking, and may account for *Castor* being challenged by at any rate part of the correct challenge for the day."

No enemy ship was " ahead " of the Second Battle Squadron between 9 p.m. and 10 p.m., but a possible explanation of this matter can be found by a perusal of the signals given in Appendix II of the *Official Despatches.* We find, at 9.32 p.m., some time before the *Castor* was challenged, the following signal made by flashing-lamp from the Vice-Admiral commanding Battle-Cruiser Fleet to the *Princess Royal*: " Please give me challenge and reply now in force as they have been lost." And appended to this is the note: " (Challenge and reply passed as requested)."

At the time this visual signal was made from the *Lion* to the *Princess Royal* the *Lion* had just turned to a south course; the *Princess Royal* was astern of *Lion*; the enemy was bearing about north, the Second Squadron being about 4 miles away and the other enemy battle squadrons about 6 or 7 miles. The *Castor* was also about 7 miles distant from *Lion*, and if this was the signal read by the *Manners* there is no reason why it should not have been read by the enemy.

At 10.20 p.m. the Second Light Cruiser Squadron came into action with enemy ships, and the German light cruiser *Frauenlob* was sunk. As usual the *Southampton* sent a report of the enemy's position to the Commander-in-Chief, but, owing to her wireless having

been shot away, the information did not reach Jellicoe until about an hour later. The flashes of the guns were seen in the *Iron Duke*, but were taken to mean that an enemy destroyer attack was being driven off. Shortly after this the *Castor* and the Eleventh Flotilla were again in action for a few minutes, and at 11 p.m. the Fourth Flotilla was in action with enemy cruisers.

BRITISH DESTROYER ATTACKS

The best example of the difficulty of distinguishing ships in the dark, however, occurred during this action when the destroyer *Spitfire*, after firing two torpedoes, one of which probably hit the enemy light cruiser *Elbing*, turned to the westward, firing on the enemy ships to distract their concentration of fire on the *Tipperary*, already badly damaged. The *Spitfire* then attempted to return to the *Tipperary*, and observing what she thought to be a cruiser with her searchlights trained on the *Tipperary*, opened fire on her. This enemy ship was not a cruiser but the *Westfalen* leading the enemy battle fleet line. The *Spitfire* then cut through the enemy line astern of the *Westfalen*.

In the *Spitfire's* report it now states :

" I then closed *Tipperary* but immediately

came in sight of two enemy cruisers close to, steering to south-eastward. The nearer or more southern one altered course to ram me apparently, I therefore put my helm hard-a-port and the two ships rammed each other, port bow to port bow."

It was no cruiser, however, that the *Spitfire* rammed but the dreadnought battleship *Nassau*. At the moment of impact the *Nassau* fired at the *Spitfire*, but owing to the proximity of the ships the guns could not be depressed sufficiently, and all but two of the shots passed over her. The *Spitfire* was telescoped for a considerable portion of her length ; her bridge, searchlight platform and upper works being demolished. She succeeded, however, in reaching home.

At 11.25 p.m. the Fourth Destroyer Flotilla came into action with the enemy. A large ship, probably the *Westfalen*, was sighted from the flotilla leader *Broke*. Fire was immediately opened on the *Broke* as she was turning away under full helm. A shell struck her lower bridge, killing all hands there and jamming the helm. In consequence, the *Broke* continued to turn, and struck the *Sparrowhawk*, her next astern. The *Sparrowhawk* while still locked with *Broke* was rammed, right aft, by another destroyer, and 5 feet of her stern was cut off.

WHY THE ENEMY ESCAPED

It is desirable now to deal, in some detail, with the information, or lack of information, received by Jellicoe.

It has been often assumed, and, in fact, stated, that Jellicoe should have known that the enemy would return by the Horns Reef, and the mere fact that a large enemy fleet was able to cross astern of our battle fleet, and escape into protected waters, without being brought to action by our capital ships, certainly requires explanation and cannot be dismissed as being merely "the fortunes of war".

No report of the whereabouts of the enemy fleet having reached Jellicoe since nightfall, at 10.46 p.m. he signalled asking the *Castor* if she was engaging enemy destroyers, and a message from the *Castor*, which crossed his signal, informed him that enemy cruisers were being engaged. The message reporting the *Southampton's* action did not reach Jellicoe until 11.38 p.m.

Messages received from the Admiralty did not make the situation any clearer. One of these, received in the *Iron Duke* at 10.23 p.m., gave the geographical position of the enemy battle fleet at 9 p.m., but this position was obviously incorrect, and Jellicoe had to ignore

it. At 10.41 p.m. a further message sent from the Admiralty informed him that the enemy was believed to be returning to its base, as its course was S.S.E.$\frac{3}{4}$E. This message was not received in the *Iron Duke* until after 11 p.m., and the information did not fit in with that of the *Southampton's* message received at 11.38 p.m., or with one from the *Birmingham* received at 11.30 p.m. Both these latter messages made it look as if the enemy was still to the westward, making to the southward.

Actually the message sent from the Admiralty, at 10.41 p.m., was a summary of two or three enemy messages, which had been intercepted. One of these, which was made by Scheer shortly after 9 p.m., asked for an airship reconnaissance near Horns Reef at daylight. Here was a definite indication of Scheer's intended route home. Such information, if given to Jellicoe, must have entirely altered his plans during the night; but this vital information, which could have reached him before 9.30 p.m., was withheld. Apparently it was deemed sufficient to send him a brief summary, about one and a half hours later, stating the course and speed of the enemy, but omitting all reference to the all-important fact, a plain indication that Scheer intended returning by the Horns Reef Passage.

Information received direct from a ship

actually sighting the enemy would obviously carry more weight than intercepted messages, forwarded from the Admiralty after a considerable time had elapsed. Further, implicit reliance would not, in 1916, have been placed on the accuracy of positions obtained by directional wireless, then in its infancy. In any case, there was no information as yet to justify any change in the belief that the actions taking place were only between light forces.[1]

In the heat and turmoil of night actions, while destroyers are under heavy fire, being separated from their leaders, experiencing collisions and other distracting incidents, it is to be expected that individual Captains of destroyers would have little time to think of sending messages reporting the enemy. It would naturally appear to them that what they saw, their leaders also saw. We have noted also that, even the destroyers, in some cases, mistook battleships for cruisers. It does, however, appear that one of the leaders

[1] In this connection it should be noted that, during the hours of darkness, even the enemy capital ships would be using their secondary armament, rather than their more ponderous turret guns. There would, therefore, be little to distinguish between the firing of battleships and light cruisers so far as flash and glare were concerned.

of the flotillas should have sent some information to Jellicoe. It was done by the leader of the Twelfth Flotilla later, as we shall see, under equally difficult circumstances. In this connection, in referring to the sighting of some ships by the Thirteenth Flotilla at 2.35 a.m., Beatty, in his report, states:

"Some of the strange vessels were sighted by *Champion* and *Obdurate*, who took them to be some of our own light cruisers. This is impossible, and it is very much to be regretted that *Champion* did not take steps to identify them. If, as is probable, they were the enemy, an excellent opportunity was missed for an attack in the early morning light. More important still, a portion of the enemy might have been definitely located."

A BAD FAILURE

What applies to destroyers does not, however, apply to battleships.

We have seen before that when reports came in by wireless, to the Commander-in-Chief, the geographical position of the ship making the report could not be implicitly relied on.

Jellicoe could not, himself, visualize the position, relative to the *Iron Duke*, of the *Birmingham* when that ship made an impor-

tant signal, at 11.30 p.m., giving information of enemy battle-cruisers. The position given by the *Birmingham*, in this message, was not correct and, if treated as even approximately correct, would have led Jellicoe to suppose that the enemy was well to the westward, which agreed with his appreciation. The *Birmingham*, which had lost touch with her squadron, was, in fact, close to the Fifth Battle Squadron, on their starboard quarter, but Jellicoe could not know this. The Fifth Battle Squadron—now consisting of three ships [1]—was some miles astern of the main fleet, and the damaged *Marlborough*, with her subdivision, was 3 miles to the eastward of the *Barham*—that is, farther from the enemy.

Jellicoe had not yet been informed that the *Marlborough* had dropped a long way astern. He was also unaware of the exact position of the Fifth Battle Squadron relative to the *Iron Duke*, but he could visualize, with approximate accuracy, the position, relative to the *Iron Duke*, of this squadron ; and any information from this authoritative source would have been invaluable to him.

Referring to the published reports of the Commanding Officers, we find that from the *Valiant* states :

[1] The *Warspite* had fallen out and was on her way back to harbour.

"At 10.39 p.m. observed heavy firing on starboard quarter . . . this appeared to be a night attack by one of our light cruisers and four of our destroyers on a column of enemy ships."

Again, at 11.35 p.m., the report continues :

". . . observed heavy night action on starboard quarter. From the evidence we surmised that there appeared on this occasion to be two German cruisers with at least two funnels and a crane amidships, apparently steering to the eastward at high speed. . . ."

The only German ships which answered to this description were the *Westfalen* class of battleships, and this fact would, or should, have been known to all those concerned.

In the report from the *Malaya*, the rear ship of the Fifth Battle Squadron, we find :

"11.40 p.m. 3 points abaft starboard beam observed what appeared to be an attack by our destroyers on some enemy big ships steering the same way as ours, two of which used searchlights. One of our destroyers with three funnels (appearance of *Termagant* class) was set on fire, but not before she had hit the second ship. This was seen by the column of smoke, and also the explosion was distinctly heard and felt. The

leading ship of the enemy, which was seen by the flash of the explosion, had two masts, two funnels, and a conspicuous crane (apparently *Westfalen* class)."

At this time the *Malaya* was just under 4 miles distant from the van of the enemy battle fleet. The *Valiant* was in the line ahead of the *Malaya*, and ahead of the *Valiant* was the *Barham* leading her squadron.

It will be noticed that no mention is made, in the written report from the *Valiant*, of actually distinguishing a battleship. No mention is made of these occurrences in the *Barham's* letter of proceedings, beyond the statement that " during the night there appeared to be constant attacks by torpedo craft on ships."

It is obvious, from the written reports of the *Malaya* and *Valiant*, that the van of the enemy battle fleet was actually seen, at this time, from these ships. The wealth of detail contained in the *Malaya's* report removes all doubt on this point, and it is a matter of some surprise that so little is noted as having been seen from the *Barham*.

WHAT OUR ADMIRALS KNEW

Information that enemy battleships had been sighted at this time, and in this position, must have made Jellicoe alter his appreciation

of the general situation. The invaluable information was, however, not sent, and we therefore lost the opportunity to secure the immediate fruits of victory, for which all had striven. Had definite reports of sighting enemy battleships been sent from the *Malaya* and *Valiant*, there can be little question that the German fleet would have been brought to action at daylight.

Beatty's criticism, already quoted—in regard to the failure of the *Champion* to identify strange vessels and thus definitely locate a portion of the enemy—applies with additional force to the present case, in which enemy vessels were identified, and located, but to no purpose, as no action was taken.

It is clear, from the evidence available, that firing was heard, and flashes of guns were seen, in the *Iron Duke*, and other battleships ; but, as Jellicoe says in his despatch, what was seen made it " evident that our destroyer flotillas and light cruiser squadrons were in action ". There was nothing to indicate to Jellicoe that the enemy battleships or battle-cruisers were in action.

The Vice-Admiral commanding the First Battle Squadron in the *Marlborough*—which ship was only 7 miles from the van of the enemy fleet at 11.40 p.m., whereas the *Iron Duke* was 11 miles distant from it—in his report makes no mention of the probability

of capital ships being engaged. His appreciation was, therefore, presumably similar to that of Jellicoe.

But more important still: the appreciation made by the Rear-Admiral commanding the Fifth Battle Squadron in the *Barham* was also the same. He says: "Destroyers appeared to be attacking the cruisers."

No mention is made in any of the reports from the battle-cruisers that any firing was heard, or flashes seen, from those ships. This is peculiar, because at about 10.30 p.m. the battle-cruisers were no farther from the action then being waged, than was the *Iron Duke*, and in the signal log of the *Princess Royal* the following remark is inserted under 10.5 p.m.: "Opened fire on cruisers on S. beam. 10.20 p.m. ceased fire." [1] This can only refer to other ships firing, because none of our battle-cruisers had fired a gun for nearly two hours. By 11.40 p.m. the battle-cruisers were some miles farther off than the *Iron Duke*.

In the absence of any information from any of his light forces, some 10 miles astern, or from the Fifth Battle Squadron, known to be astern, Jellicoe could not have known, or even suspected, that the enemy battle fleet was crossing astern. It would have appeared to him next to impossible that such a move-

[1] *Official Despatches*, p. 474.

ment could take place without someone in the ships astern detecting it. If detected, he would naturally expect to be given information.

We see, therefore, that, up to midnight, Jellicoe had no reason whatever to suppose that the enemy was crossing astern of our battle fleet.

WHAT THE GERMAN C.-IN-C. KNEW

Scheer, however, was perhaps not equally ignorant as to the position of our battle fleet. The German Admiralty had intercepted Jellicoe's wireless message, made at 9.15 p.m., ordering destroyer flotillas to take station 5 miles astern of our battle fleet. There is some doubt whether this information was transmitted to Scheer by his Admiralty. The *Official History* states that it was transmitted, but the Germans deny this.

If Scheer had the information, he would have realized that when his light cruisers and the van of his battle fleet ran foul of our destroyers, our battle fleet would be some miles to the southward.

He could not know, though, that our Fifth Battle Squadron and the *Marlborough's* subdivision were so far astern of the main fleet. It is believed that Scheer never wavered from his original intention of steering direct for Horns Reef, as soon as darkness set in.

At 0.10 a.m. the armoured cruiser *Black*

Prince, which had lost touch with the main fleet some hours before, was steaming to the southward to again get into touch, when she closed the rear of the First Squadron of the enemy battle fleet and was sunk at point-blank range. Ten minutes before this occurrence the *Marlborough* and her sub-division had crossed ahead of the enemy at a distance of only 4 miles from the leading ship, the *Westfalen*. If the enemy battle fleet had not been delayed by our destroyer attacks or if, owing to her damage, the *Marlborough's* speed had been reduced a little more than it was, the enemy battle fleet would have fairly met the *Marlborough's* sub-division at about midnight. There would have been terrible losses, but, we hope, not before reliable information had reached Jellicoe.

At 1.48 a.m. Jellicoe received information that enemy submarines were being sent out from German ports.

At 1.55 a.m., owing to the *Marlborough's* speed being still further reduced, the Vice-Admiral commanding the First Battle Squadron decided to shift his flag to the *Revenge*. This was accomplished at 2.30 a.m.

LAST CONTACT

At 1.43 a.m. the *Obedient*, belonging to the Twelfth Destroyer Flotilla, sighted six enemy

battleships to the south-westward. These proved to be the Second Squadron of the enemy battle fleet, and immediately the British destroyers were sighted they turned away.

On receiving the report from the *Obedient*, *Faulknor*, leading the flotilla, ordered an attack, and proceeded to a favourable position for delivering it. At 2.6 a.m. the *Faulknor* followed by three destroyers commenced to deliver her attack, under heavy fire from the enemy. The *Onslaught* was badly hit, receiving severe damage and many casualties, including her Captain and First Lieutenant. All destroyers fired their torpedoes, and the German battleship *Pommern* was hit and sunk.

During this time two reports were made by the *Faulknor* to the Commander-in-Chief. At 1.52 a.m. :

"Enemy's battleships in sight. My position 10 miles astern of First Battle Squadron."

And again at 2.12 a.m. :

"Course of enemy S.S.W."

Both these signals were made by wireless, but they were not received in the *Iron Duke*, neither did any other ship except the *Marksman*, who was in close proximity to the *Faulknor*, intercept this important information. There was a great deal of interference,

at this time, from German wireless, but it is most improbable that this interference would have prevented any other ship receiving the *Faulknor's* message if her wireless had been in perfect adjustment. It can only be concluded, therefore, that her wireless had been thrown out of adjustment in the action.

Thus the only messages which were sufficiently reliable, and definite, to justify Jellicoe in altering his appreciation failed to reach him. If these messages, which gave a definite relative position, instead of a geographical position of doubtful accuracy, had reached him and no delay, however small, had occurred in deciphering them, considering them and acting on the information, it would have been just possible, if the speed of the enemy battle fleet was not increased, for the Grand Fleet, by proceeding at full speed, to bring Scheer to action before he reached his protected waters. There would, however, not have been time to collect all our scattered destroyer flotillas or, possibly, some of the light cruisers. The battle-cruisers also, being farther to the south-west, might have been unable to arrive in time to take up station in advance of the battle fleet. On the other hand, we know that the enemy battle-cruisers were unfit for action on the morning of 1st June, as a result of the fighting the day before.

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER DAYLIGHT, 1st JUNE

BEING still without news of the enemy, the last reports having reached him at 11.30 p.m., Jellicoe decided, at 2 a.m., that if he heard nothing further during the next half-hour he would turn to the northward. When the time came for the battle fleet to turn, a report was received from the *Colossus* to the effect that the *Marlborough* and her sub-division had dropped far astern. This was the first intimation that Jellicoe had that he would be four battleships short if he encountered the enemy before the three undamaged ships of the *Marlborough's* division had rejoined.

An exaggerated importance appears to have been attached by certain Commanding Officers to keeping the position of our battle fleet concealed during the night at all costs. During the early hours of darkness Scheer must have known, approximately, the whereabouts of our fleet; he must have known it was some-

where between him and his base. Wireless silence was not, therefore, as important as before the fleets met, and it would have been to our advantage to break wireless silence rather than to leave Jellicoe ignorant of the movements, or whereabouts, of portions of his own fleet and of the enemy. In several cases important information could have been passed to the *Iron Duke*, visually, by shaded flashing-lamp, but even this comparatively safe method appears to have been sacrificed at the expense of secrecy.

This unnecessary caution is apparent when we find from the official despatches that between 9.17 p.m., when the *Iron Duke* made the last flag signal before nightfall, until 2.20 a.m., when it was again light enough to distinguish flag signals, no less than 42 wireless and 85 flashing-lamp signals are recorded, many of which are of a comparatively trivial nature.

Sunrise on 1st June was at 3.9 a.m., so by 2.30 a.m. it would be daylight, and if the enemy was still to the westward, in a position to be brought to action, he would in all probability shortly be sighted by our battle fleet, or battle-cruisers. At 2.30 a.m., therefore, Jellicoe made a signal ordering the battle fleet to alter course to north, and he informed Beatty, and all squadrons not in touch with him, to this effect.

In his despatch Jellicoe states:

"The weather was very misty at daylight, visibility being only 3 to 4 miles, and I deemed it advisable to disregard the danger from submarines due to a long line of ships, and to form line of battle, at once, in case of meeting the enemy battle fleet before I had been able to get into touch with my cruisers and destroyers."

This extract clearly shows that Jellicoe was still ignorant of the fact that the German battle fleet had passed astern of our fleet during the night.

JELLICOE DISILLUSIONED

All doubt as to the enemy's whereabouts, and all hope of being able to renew the action, was, however, finally dispersed when, at 3.55 a.m., a message was received in the *Iron Duke*, from the Admiralty, which read: "At 2.30 a.m. German Main Fleet in lat. 55° 33′ N., long. 6° 50′ E., course S.E. by S., 16 knots" (0329). This position was only 17 miles from Horns Reef, whereas our fleet was still double that distance away, so it was useless to attempt to overtake the enemy.

The chance of action at daylight, for which Jellicoe had hoped and for which his night dispositions had been made, was lost for two

reasons, neither of which were within his control. First, the failure on the part of the Admiralty to forward the information that Scheer intended to return by Horns Reef; and, second, the failure of the ships astern of our main fleet to inform him that the enemy battle fleet was crossing astern.

We have already reviewed the meagre information which was available to Jellicoe, and the definite information which should have, but did not, reach him during the night. In this connection it is interesting to note that, with the exception of the firing heard astern, after 11 p.m. similar information was available to Beatty, in the battle-cruisers. All messages sent by wireless from the Admiralty, or from ships when reporting the enemy, would, normally, be taken in by both the *Iron Duke* and the *Lion*. In the present instance, owing to the *Lion's* wireless having been shot away, the messages were received in the *New Zealand* [1] and should have been passed on, by visual signal, with no appreciable delay. This is merely in accordance with the ordinary signalling arrangements in force in the fleet, and the procedure was well understood by all concerned. The only difference, therefore, would be that, as these messages had to be passed to the *Lion* from another ship, Beatty

[1] *Official History*, Vol. III, pp. 413, 415.

could not see them until a few minutes later than would be the case if the *Lion's* wireless had been in order.

WHAT BEATTY THOUGHT

The appreciation of the situation made in the *Lion* should, therefore, have been made on the same information as the appreciation made in the *Iron Duke.* Let us now see what Beatty's appreciation was. At 3.50 a.m. Beatty signalled to Jellicoe:

"When last seen enemy was to the west, steering S.W., and proceeding slowly. Zeppelin has passed astern of me steering west. Submit I may sweep S.W. to locate enemy."

At 4.7 a.m. Beatty ordered his light cruisers to "spread well to the westward to locate enemy".

At 4.30 a.m. he signalled to his battle cruisers:

"Damage yesterday was heavy on both sides. We hope to-day to cut off and annihilate the whole German fleet. Every man must do his utmost. *Lutzow* is sinking and another German battle-cruiser expected to have sunk."

The above signals can only mean that Beatty's appreciation of the situation at day-

light was the same as Jellicoe's, for he clearly believed that the enemy was still to the westward and in a position which would enable our fleet to bring it to action. This belief appears to have been maintained by Beatty after Jellicoe had reluctantly altered his views. Beatty's 4.30 a.m. signal to his battle-cruisers must have been made before he himself saw the information contained in the 0329 message [1] from the Admiralty, which would have been received by the *New Zealand*, on behalf of the *Lion*, at 3.55 a.m., the same time as it was received in the *Iron Duke*.

There is no reason to suppose that any of the Admiralty messages failed to reach the *Lion*. They should not have failed. Beatty's reference to *Lutzow* sinking, in his 4.30 a.m. signal to the battle-cruisers, indicates that the 1.48 a.m. message was received ; without this message, which gave the position of the damaged *Lutzow*, it is not clear how it would be known that she was sinking. As this message was, apparently, received it can only be assumed the others were received also.

Any doubts Beatty may have had as to the accuracy of the information contained in the Admiralty message, or of the position of the enemy, were laid at rest at 4.40 a.m., when he received a signal from Jellicoe, saying,

[1] See p. 137.

" Enemy fleet has returned to harbour. Try to locate *Lutzow*." As a fact, the *Lutzow* sank at about 1.45 a.m., though this was not known at the time.

THE GERMAN FLEET RETIRES INTO PORT

The German fleet passed Horns Reef at about 3.20 a.m. and reached their protected waters shortly afterwards, but not before the battleship *Ostfriesland* had struck a mine, in a minefield laid by the *Abdiel* a month before. The fleet passed just clear of the mines laid by the *Abdiel* at 2 a.m. With the knowledge we now have, it is safe to say that Scheer had decided before dark to make his way as quickly, and as directly, as possible to Horns Reef. He was frequently delayed by his line being thrown into disorder by our destroyer attacks, but he succeeded in avoiding a renewed general action and attained his object, not, however, without losses. His " break through " cost him a battleship, three light cruisers and two destroyers, no small tribute to Jellicoe's disposition of our forces and the gallantry of our own light cruisers and destroyers during these few crucial hours of darkness.

Our fleet now cruised about, searching for damaged ships and picking up survivors, until noon, when, having swept out the area south

of the scene of action without obtaining any further sight of the enemy, a course was shaped for home. The battle fleet arrived at Scapa Flow during the forenoon of 2nd June, and at 9.45 p.m. on the same day Jellicoe telegraphed to the Admiralty:

"Battle fleet at four hours' notice and ready for action."

CHAPTER IX

ACCOUNTS AND THEIR AUTHORS

A FEW trustworthy and reliable accounts of the Battle of Jutland have already been published. Chief amongst these is that, already alluded to, contained in the *Official History of the War—Naval Operations*, Vol. III, the work of the late Sir Julian Corbett. Two others of merit are the account in the latest (1926) additional volumes of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, written by Captain E. Altham, C.B., R.N., and a short anonymous article published in the *Quarterly Review* of January 1924.

That portion of Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon's book, *The Jutland Scandal*, which deals with the actual course of events during the battle provides a particularly clear and simple account, easily understandable by the layman. The statements of fact in all the foregoing accounts are accurate and no wrong conclusions are drawn through facts being misrepresented, or through the suppression of essential details.

On the other hand, there have appeared a number of accounts, written without adequate knowledge, historical or technical, some of which were, apparently, inspired by personal animus. These not infrequently give a totally false impression of the tactics employed by the various Commanders and the influences which governed them. It is to be feared too that an unduly large percentage of the public, which culls its naval knowledge solely from the newspapers, has been grievously misled on the subject of Jutland by articles which have from time to time appeared in certain sections of the daily, or weekly, Press.

It is extraordinary that newspapers of standing should accept the views and opinions of uninformed contributors on this and so many other professional matters connected with the Navy ; for not only do they thereby admit to their pages articles which are full of errors, so palpable that they are ridiculous to the Service reader, but these papers do, unintentionally, a dis-service to the country by misleading the public on questions which are often of national importance.

In a short work of this kind it is not possible to refute each and every mis-statement, misconception, or misrepresentation which has been made about the Battle of Jutland ; one can only select a few of the more

glaring and persistent errors and deal with them.

Among those writers who have based much of their argument on the subject on false premises, the following are the most prolific: Mr. Filson Young, who before the battle was a temporary member of, the then, Sir David Beatty's staff in his flagship, the *Lion*; Mr. W. H. Wilson, author of a number of articles in the Press and of a work entitled *Battleships in Action*; Mr. A. H. Pollen, the writer of *The Navy in Battle*; Commander Carlyon Bellairs, M.P., who wrote *The Battle of Jutland—The Sowing and the Reaping*; and, more recently, The Right Honourable Winston S. Churchill, M.P.

Mr. Filson Young was the author of articles which, for inaccuracy and innuendo, it would be difficult to surpass. He has been very fully and capably criticized by Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon in his book, *The Jutland Scandal*, and it is not proposed to deal with his writings any further here. The works of the other writers mentioned, however, require some detailed attention. To this end, it will be simplest to select successive phases of the battle and to show where their accounts, or observations, have gone particularly astray from realities. Before doing so, however, a few general remarks on the works of these writers will not be out of place.

At the outset it is necessary to remember that the conduct of war at sea is a highly technical art, to the study of which men devote their whole lives, and it is one which cannot be learned without practical experience in the handling of fleets. Of Mr. Wilson and Mr. Pollen it is kindest to say that in writing on this highly technical, and intricate, subject they attempted a task for which, by training, they were inadequately equipped. The former is a naval historian of some repute, but when he comes to dealing with the intricacies of modern naval warfare he is clearly out of his depth, or has been very badly advised. Mr. Pollen obviously wrote his book before he was even in a position to study the facts in detail. It teems with inaccuracies and loose generalities. Both these authors appear to have written with much bias, and to have "situated their appreciation" at the outset.

Commander Carlyon Bellairs' book is imbued throughout with a captious and carping spirit. Nothing that Admiral Jellicoe, or the battle fleet, did could be correct in the eyes of this omniscient and self-confident critic. His assertions, often made without any foundation or any evidence to support them, are presumptuous. He even attacked the proposed "Official Record of the Battle of Jutland" while it was still being considered by

the Board of Admiralty, and before its contents were available to anyone outside those immediately concerned with its compilation.

Mr. Winston Churchill, who has lately given us his views on Jutland, must be suspect from the time when he claimed [1] to have "discovered" Admiral Beatty and tried to impress on the public that the "decisions which I had the honour of taking (as First Lord of the Admiralty) in regard to him were most serviceable to the Royal Navy and to the British Arms". One of the reasons given for forming such a high opinion of Beatty is that "he viewed questions of naval strategy and tactics in a different light to an average naval officer; he approached them, as it seemed to me, much more as a soldier would". Again, he says: "I had no doubts whatever when the command of the Battle-Cruiser Squadron fell vacant in the spring of 1913 in appointing him (Beatty) over the heads of all to this incomparable command."

He naïvely admits that his judgment of Beatty's qualifications was formed, not on the latter's service record or experience in high command, but owing to an impression conceived during conversations with him in a room at the Admiralty. This being so, we cannot expect to find Mr. Churchill indulging

[1] *The World Crisis*, Vol. II, p. 87.

in criticism which might reflect gravely on his own judgment, but we do expect from a statesman of his eminence and a writer of his distinction impartial handling in his presentation of facts. Unhappily, as will be seen in due course, he fails us badly in this respect on more than one occasion.

There have been a number of less important articles and other publications on the subject of Jutland, but they too, for the most part, have been penned by those who can claim little or no personal knowledge of modern naval conditions, while many do not seem to have even possessed ability to follow actual events intelligently. This, however, can hardly be said of the account of the battle which appeared in the earlier (1922) edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Captain A. C. Dewar, R.N., its author, had very exceptional facilities for checking his facts, and his early naval training (he retired from the Active List as a Lieutenant R.N. in 1910) should have been sufficient to have enabled him to draw correct conclusions. This he signally failed to do. It is only fair, though, to the publishers of that usually authoritative work to say that they were not long in realizing their mistake, and they have taken the first opportunity to expunge this article and replace it by that to which reference has already been made.

There remains one other publication to be noticed. This is the *Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*, published by H.M. Stationery Office in 1924. Nothing appears on the title-page, or elsewhere, in this book to indicate by what authority it had been compiled and published; it is only by turning to Appendix G, on page 106, that the uninitiated can discover the fact that it emanates from the Admiralty, and from Note 1, on the same page, that it is "official". No information is vouchsafed as to whether this *Narrative* is concurred in by the Board as a whole or not. The remarks in the Introduction may lead one to suppose that it is merely the *Harper Record* revised so far as German evidence is concerned. This is not the case. It is probable that the compilation of material made for the "Official Record" was used when required, but of this I have no knowledge. It was unknown to me, except from hearsay, that a "narrative" was being prepared, and I had no part whatever in the production thereof.

We are told [1] that this publication is a "narrative" and not an "appreciation", and, again,[2] that "only statements of fact are included, inferences being omitted". Nevertheless, we find the word "probably" in

[1] *Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*, p. 106, Note 1.
[2] Ibid., p. 113, Note 6.

connection with the movements of the British fleet, and such a phrase as " it is justifiable to assume ". These should not occur in a narrative of *facts* only.

Again,[1] we read, " The *Lion* altered course at this time to N.N.E., apparently with the twofold intention . . ." If there is evidence of intention the word " apparently " is redundant ; if there was no such evidence it could easily have been obtained.

This " official " narrative is a curious, disjointed production. Important facts are often half-hidden in the form of footnotes, especially where they refer to our battle fleet, while Lord Jellicoe's dignified, and fully justified, criticisms of its errors and defects, published in the form of an Appendix, are answered by querulous interjections quite out of keeping with an official publication. The whole bears the imprint of many hands and much " chopping and piecing " to produce a desired impression. As an authentic record it can only be described as thoroughly unsatisfactory.

From the general we will now pass on to the particular.

[1] *Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*, p. 34.

CHAPTER X

SOME MISREPRESENTATIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

1

THE DELAY IN BRINGING THE FIFTH BATTLE SQUADRON INTO ACTION

SEVERAL publications, including the *Admiralty Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*, impute blame to Admiral Evan-Thomas, or misrepresent the reason, for the Fifth Battle Squadron not being in a position to support the battle-cruisers when the action opened at 3.45 p.m.

The *Admiralty Narrative* states : [1]

"When the action commenced it found itself seven miles on the *Lion's* port quarter, and though the *Barham* and *Warspite* opened fire on the 2nd Scouting Group about 4 p.m. and drove them to the eastward, it was not till ten minutes later that they were able to range on the German battle-cruisers."

[1] *Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*, p. 24.

Commander Carlyon Bellairs states : [1]

" The four fast battleships of the *Queen Elizabeth* class, armed with eight 15-inch guns each, were 10,000 yards, or 5 nautical miles, away and out of range."

Mr. H. W. Wilson states : [2]

" The Battle-Cruiser Force was now steering north-east to close the Germans ; unfortunately, during the alterations of course, the 5th Battle Squadron had fallen seriously out of station and were seven miles, instead of five (the distance ordered) from Beatty. It subsequently reduced this distance somewhat but was still dangerously out of station when contact with the German heavy ships was obtained."

Again : [3]

" . . . the aim of the whole British operation was to bring on a decisive battle. Beatty could only concentrate his force by falling back with his battle cruisers on the 5th Battle Squadron or by reducing speed in order to let the 5th Battle Squadron come up."

Mr. Winston Churchill states : [4]

[1] *The Battle of Jutland*, p. 134.
[2] *Battleships in Action*, Vol. II, p. 135.
[3] Ibid., p. 136.
[4] *The World Crisis* (1916–1918), p. 122.

" At 2.32 the *Lion*, having already warned her consorts by signal of her intentions, turned about again, and increasing her speed to 22 knots set off in pursuit. . . ."

This latter is a misrepresentation of the facts. The *Lion*, it is true, warned " her consorts " by a preparatory signal that she intended to turn to S.S.E., but turned herself without ensuring that the executive signal reached " her consorts "—the Fifth Battle Squadron. The preparatory signal is stated [1] to have been made by searchlight. The executive signal was, however, made by flags alone and failed on that account to be seen by *Barham* for several minutes.

The above misrepresentation, which appeared also in an extract published in *The Times* on 9th February 1927, very rightly brought forth a strong protest from Admiral Evan-Thomas in a letter to the same paper dated 13th February.

Mr. Churchill continues : [2]

" But the Fifth Battle Squadron, 4½ miles astern, continued to carry out the previous instructions, and for eight minutes steered in exactly the opposite direction. . . . The result, however, of his (Admiral Evan-Thomas)

[1] House of Commons, 14th March 1927.
[2] *The World Crisis* (1916–1918), p. 123.

eight minutes' delay in turning was inexorably to keep him and his tremendous guns out of action for the first most critical and most fatal half-hour, and even thereafter to keep him at extreme range."

All the above extracts imply that the Fifth Battle Squadron was at fault in not coming into action against the heavy ships of the enemy as soon as possible. Mr. Churchill's somewhat severe criticism is, however, modified when he says, later : [1]

" It would, however, no doubt have been better if the original cruising formation of the battle-cruisers and the Fifth Battle Squadron had been more compact."

With this one exception none of these publications contain one word of criticism of Beatty, the Admiral commanding the advanced forces, for having definitely stationed the Fifth Battle Squadron 5 miles away from the *Lion*, and in such a direction that it would certainly be delayed in joining action if our battle-cruisers were the first to meet the enemy. It was this decision, combined with the omission to order " Close " when the preparatory signal was made and failure on the part of the signal staff of the *Lion* to pass the executive signal without

[1] *The World Crisis* (1916–1918), p. 125.

delay to " her consorts ", that lost Beatty the services of these powerful ships during the " most critical and most fatal half-hour."

It is, at all times, the duty of the senior officer so to dispose his forces that if a concentration of these forces is desirable it can be effected without delay. The disposition ordered by Beatty was the fundamental cause of the delay in concentration, and it is unjust to blame Admiral Evan-Thomas for this. In the publications referred to no mention is made of the fact that the delay was augmented by the failure of the signalling staff in the *Lion* to transmit, efficiently and without delay, the signal to the *Barham* to alter course to the south-eastward. A signal was made by flags which was not clear to the *Barham*, owing to smoke interference and the distance between the ships, and Beatty's staff knew, or should have known, it was not clear because it was not at once " answered ". Responsibility for the reception of the message rested with him and his staff, and with nobody else.

2

THE GUNNERY EFFICIENCY OF THE BRITISH BATTLE-CRUISER FLEET

In referring to the first phase of the engagement between Beatty's and von Hipper's

battle-cruisers the Admiralty narrative states : [1]

" The damage done to the German battle-cruisers in this phase of the action was considerable, but German information on the point is not conclusive."

The German evidence on this point is very definite and conclusive. Von Hipper himself has referred to the inaccurate shooting of our battle-cruisers, and compared it most unfavourably to that of the Fifth Battle Squadron and other battleships.[2] It is very doubtful if any serious damage was done to the enemy battle-cruisers by the fire of our battle-cruisers, excepting the *Queen Mary*, during this stage of the action.

The *Admiralty Narrative* makes no mention of the mistake whereby the distribution of fire in our battle-cruiser squadron was such that the German battle-cruiser *Derfflinger* was unfired at for some time. This serious blunder is not referred to in any detail in any of the other publications under review, in spite of its far-reaching effect.

This same *Narrative* states : [3]

[1] *Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*, p. 21.
[2] *The Fighting Forces*, January 1927, p. 556.
[3] Ibid., p. 20.

" At 4.33 the fire of the *Lion* and *Princess Royal* forced the *Lutzow* to turn away."

No evidence is forthcoming to support this statement. This " turn away " of the enemy battle-cruisers was made to avoid the torpedoes from our attacking destroyers; actually it was not completely successful as the *Seydlitz* was hit. In fact, there is very strong evidence that the fire of the *Lion* and the *Princess Royal*, which ships were ordered to concentrate on the *Lutzow*, was anything but effective. The gunnery officer of the *Lutzow*, Commander Paschen, states: [1]

" Neither *Lion* nor *Princess Royal* hit us once between 4.2 and 5.23 p.m.; their total hits were three in 95 minutes."

Mr. Winston Churchill states: [2]

" As the action proceeded the British battle-cruisers, although reduced to an inferiority in numbers, began to assert an ascendancy over the enemy. Their guns became increasingly effective, and they themselves received no further serious injury."

It has been shown conclusively that the gunnery of our battle-cruisers was not of a high standard, and the evidence is quite

[1] *R.U.S.I. Journal*, No. 485, p. 34.
[2] *The World Crisis* (1916–1918), p. 130.

clear that, at the time to which Mr. Churchill alludes, it was not the guns of the battle-cruisers which "began to assert an ascendancy" but those of the Fifth Battle Squadron.

Again, he says: [1]

"In this phase of the action, which is called 'The Run to the North', firing was continued by the battle-cruisers on both sides."

Here again it is the Fifth Battle Squadron which should be given the credit; that squadron was almost continually in action, whereas very little firing took place from our battle-cruisers during this time, as they lost sight of the enemy shortly after 5 p.m. and did not regain contact for half an hour.

After mentioning the loss of the *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary* the author continues: [2]

"It is difficult to compare sea war with land war. But each battle-cruiser was a unit comparable at least to a complete infantry division. Two divisions out of his (Beatty's) six have been annihilated in the twinkling of an eye. The enemy, whom he could not defeat with six ships to five, are now five

[1] *The World Crisis* (1916–1918), p. 132.
[2] Ibid., p. 129.

to four. Far away all five German battle-cruisers . . . are still intact. . . ."

This quotation appears from the context to be intended as praise for Beatty. Why any commander should be praised, and not blamed, for losing two " divisions " out of six when opposed by only five " divisions " which were left intact is not clear. Mr. Churchill, however, again ignores the Fifth Battle Squadron—part of Beatty's force. Beatty had ten ships to five, not six to five, and after the loss of his two " divisions " the odds in his favour were still eight to five; and yet, as Mr. Churchill says, he " could not defeat " the enemy. It is well that land war cannot be compared to sea war—the author would find some difficulty in withholding blame from any army commander with ten divisions at his disposal if he failed to defeat, and left intact, an enemy force of only five divisions.

3

INFORMATION GIVEN TO JELLICOE BEFORE MAKING CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY BATTLE FLEET

The Admiralty narrative makes little mention in the text of the lack of reliable information given to Jellicoe. It does, however, state

that from 5.0 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. no reports came in.

Commander Bellairs states : [1]

" He (Beatty) maintained contact with the enemy, reported his movements . . ."

Mr. A. H. Pollen states : [2]

" It is to be supposed that Sir David Beatty kept Admiral Jellicoe informed from time to time of the position, speed and course of his fleet and of the enemy."

Here we have one mis-statement of fact and one supposition, without foundation. Beatty did not maintain contact with the enemy, he lost touch shortly after his turn to the northward, and sent no reports to Jellicoe during the time when accurate information would have been of inestimable value to him. In his despatch Beatty states :

" The visibility was for the most part low and fluctuating and caution forbade me to close the range too much with my inferior force."

It is not clear to what phase of the action this remark applies, but this period was the only one in which he was in inferior force as

[1] *The Battle of Jutland*, p. 139.
[2] *The Navy in Battle*, p. 338.

compared with enemy ships of similar power and speed. Nevertheless, it is a clearly recognized principle that undue caution should not be allowed to interfere with the most important duty of the advanced forces, viz.: to give the Commander-in-Chief regular and precise information of the enemy's movements. Caution did not forbid Commodore Goodenough from closing the enemy, with his very inferior force, for the purpose of obtaining information.

4

THE DEPLOYMENT

So many criticisms have been made on the method of deployment that it is quite impossible to deal with them all. In many cases critics have treated this as a geometric problem; they have pointed out what might, or might not, have occurred if Jellicoe had deployed sooner than he did; they have assumed that Jellicoe knew, or could see, the exact position, strength and disposition of the German battle fleet. No one will deny that an earlier deployment would have been to our advantage, but the information essential to a Commander-in-Chief before deployment can be made with any confidence was lacking. An early deployment made on accurate

information is good, but one made on insufficient knowledge of the position of the enemy is the negation of sound tactics.

Scheer's early deployment has been quoted as an example of what Jellicoe might have done ; but Scheer, when he deployed, had an enemy—our battle-cruisers and Fifth Battle Squadron—in sight. Scheer deployed, not against our battle fleet, but against our advanced forces, with whom his battle-cruiser Admiral had kept touch ever since he first sighted them, to the moment of leading them up to his main battle fleet. When he did meet our main fleet he found that his early deployment resulted in his joining action under most unfavourable conditions. Tactically his position could hardly have been worse. It was a striking example of the danger of deploying without adequate information or, having deployed, of being forced into action by an enemy who had secured an initial advantage.

The *Admiralty Narrative* makes no adverse criticism of Jellicoe's deployment—it only hints ; thus, on page 47, " The battle fleet after deployment could only occasionally get into action. Its actual firing was confined to two periods of about 20 minutes and a quarter of an hour respectively." The implication is that the method of deployment was responsible for curtailing the time during

which the enemy could be fired at. This was not the case ; the avoiding tactics persistently pursued by Scheer was the main cause. Incidentally, the battle fleet was in action from 6.17 to 6.54, and again from 7.10 to 7.25 p.m., or two periods of 37 minutes and a quarter of an hour respectively.

Mr. Wilson [1] states :

" A deployment to starboard would have brought the British into a line ahead on an opposite course to the Germans, but it would have facilitated an annihilating attack on the old German battleships at the rear of Scheer's line and have forced the German Dreadnoughts to go to their aid."

The author does not explain how Jellicoe could know that the old German battleships were at the rear of Scheer's line at a time when he had not even been given accurate information as to the whereabouts of the enemy battle fleet, much less of its course and composition. This writer continues : " Though, normally, a battle passing on opposite courses will be indecisive, yet here were special conditions favouring a decision. But for such a deployment to give great results it ought to have begun at 6 p.m., or even before. It did not begin, and Beatty had to pass at full speed

[1] *Battleships in Action*, Vol. II, p. 150.

across the front of the fleet in order to clear the range and obtain a favourable tactical position."

The fact that deployment could not take place earlier than it did, owing to lack of reliable information, is, it will be observed, not even mentioned. Beatty crossed the front of the fleet, at full speed, to take up his assigned station and for no other reason.

Again, to quote Mr. Wilson : [1]

" Jellicoe's deployment, if much delayed, and made to port instead of to starboard, none the less placed the British battle fleet in a position of distinct advantage."

The author has already argued that advantage would have been gained by a deployment to starboard ; it would, therefore, appear that, in his opinion, a deployment either way was tactically sound. If so, his reason for condemning Jellicoe's deployment is not clear.

Again, he says : [2] " The British were in an extremely favourable position " : but the fact that Jellicoe's deployment enabled this extremely favourable position to be attained is ignored.

Mr. Wilson's criticisms on this point are those of an amateur and might be ignored

[1] *Battleships in Action*, Vol. II, p. 152.
[2] Ibid., p. 157.

but for the fact that he perverts the views expressed in the German Official History on the British deployment. He says: [1] "The deployment to port is not strongly condemned by the German Official History."

This is a peculiar interpretation of the actual views expressed in this publication, which are to the effect that the deployment to port was to the British advantage, whereas deployment to starboard would have led our fleet into a position which would have been only too acceptable to the German fleet.[2]

Commander Bellairs never loses an opportunity in his book of using the words "away from the enemy" when mentioning the deployment to port. A deployment on the wing nearest the enemy need not necessarily be a deployment "towards" the enemy, and one on the wing farthest from the enemy need not be "away" from the enemy. He condemns the deployment on the port wing column so frequently that one tires of the repetition.

Commander Bellairs is another critic who is not too particular about the accuracy of his statements. He states: [3] "At 6.50 the *Lion* was well inside towards the enemy, three

[1] *Battleships in Action*, Vol. II, p. 191.
[2] German Official History, Vol. V, pp. 283–284.
[3] *The Battle of Jutland*, p. 184.

miles S.S.E. of the *King George V* . . ." As a fact, at 6.50, and for some time after this, the *Lion* was farther away from the enemy than the van of our battle fleet. Again, he states: [1] "7.17 p.m. Battle-cruisers were now on starboard bow of Grand Fleet, from four to five miles ahead of the van . . ." This was not the case. The battle-cruisers were at this time on the port bow of the battle fleet and farther from the enemy than any British battleship.

A deployment to starboard, as advocated by the writers referred to above, would have exposed our weakest division of battleships to the concentrated fire of the best German ships, and would also have placed our fleet in a very favourable position for a massed attack by enemy destroyers, and within range of the torpedoes from the German battleships. Furthermore, our fleet would not have been between the enemy and his base.

A deployment on a centre column, in favour of which Mr. Winston Churchill argues with a wealth of geometrical reasoning and no practical knowledge, was possible, but had nothing whatever to commend it tactically. It is a clumsy and complicated manœuvre at the best of times, and one which, undoubtedly,

[1] *The Battle of Jutland*, p. 292.

does not commend itself at such close quarters. The effect of it would have been that our battle fleet would not have straightened itself out and developed its gunfire as soon as it did, nor would Jellicoe have interposed the Grand Fleet between the enemy and the latter's line of retreat with such certainty as he did by his deployment to port.

When we remember that the deployment, as ordered by Jellicoe, enabled our fleet to attain at once a position of immense tactical and strategical advantage there seems little object in exploring alternative methods. No other method could have attained a *more* favourable tactical position for the British fleet.

5

THE "FOLLOW ME" EPISODE

Commander Bellairs' most flagrant misrepresentation of actual facts centres round an incorrect statement of time at which a signal was made by Beatty. This he proceeds to use as a lever to strengthen his criticism of the "turn away" manœuvre.

To begin with, he states: [1]

"From about 7.21 to 7.33, while this turn away was in progress, Beatty steered well

[1] *Battle of Jutland*, p. 188.

to the Westward towards the enemy and engaged them."

This is untrue. During this time Beatty did not steer well to the Westward and his battle-cruisers did not fire a shot.

The author continues:

"He made one desperate effort to save the situation by a signal, taken in by the whole fleet, imploring the van of the battle fleet, led by the *King George V*, to follow him, cut off and surround the enemy. But the rigid line could not be broken! The signal from the *Iron Duke* was a thing that must be obeyed, and the Grand Fleet went out of action . . . it is a matter of common knowledge throughout the Navy that a signal of this nature was made. . . ."

Again he says: [1]

"No response was made by the Admiral of the Second Battle Squadron to Beatty's imploring signal at 7.20 p.m. to follow him and cut off the enemy. In all probability he signalled for permission to follow Beatty and got no answer, or a refusal."

At the time Commander Bellairs' book was published the signals made during the battle had not been made public. The message

[1] *The Battle of Jutland*, p. 262.

referred to was a wireless message, sent in cipher, and should therefore only have been known to those who had access to confidential documents. As, however, Commander Bellairs seems to have acquired information sufficiently authentic to enable him to refer to the text of a secret message, it is pertinent to suggest that he would also have been aware that the message originated from Beatty, *not* at 7.20 p.m., when the battle fleet was about to turn away to avoid the enemy's torpedoes, but at 7.50 p.m., some time after the battle fleet had reformed and hauled round to south-west to close the enemy again. If the correct time of origin of this signal had been stated by the author, he would have been unable to connect it with the turn away of the battle fleet. It is, apparently, equitable, in the author's opinion, to ignore accuracy if such action is necessary to glorify Beatty at the expense of Jellicoe. The matter can best be summed up by quoting an extract from the review of Commander Bellairs' book which appeared in *The Times* of 19th February, 1920:

"Here we come to close quarters with our author and shall not spare him. He makes a statement which, in his judgment, at any

rate, is gravely prejudicial to the professional reputation of the Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet, and writes him down to the level of a Calder or even of a Byng. He adduces no evidence for this statement beyond saying that ' it is common knowledge throughout the Navy that such a signal was made and logged ', and he makes it clear by implication that he has not himself seen the logs, from which alone, as he acknowledges, the true facts can be ascertained and their true bearing on Lord Jellicoe's conduct of the battle appreciated. Now this, in our judgment, is outrageous and intolerable. It is stabbing a man in the back and then running away."

We feel sure that, to all fair-minded persons, this criticism of the author's methods errs on the side of moderation. The truth of the incident of this " follow me " message, which was as unnecessary as it was meaningless, and only likely to mislead Jellicoe, has been stated in Chapter VI.

The reckless and totally inaccurate statements made by Commander Bellairs in regard to this incident were seized upon by those who wished to find a new " stick " wherewith to beat Admiral Jellicoe, and the dust thrown in the eyes of the public stuck,

as dust will stick, until the publication of the Official Despatches and signals in December 1920, and even then the inaccuracy was only contradicted in certain quarters. The "fact" that this signal, which became known as the "follow me" signal, was made at 7.15 p.m. was stated in the *Daily Mail* of 21st September 1920, 1st November 1920, and 3rd November 1920; in the issue of 12th October 1920 the time was quoted as 7.32 p.m. Among other publications which mentioned this incident was the *Globe* of 21st September 1920, which also quoted 7.15 p.m. as the time the signal was made. It will be seen, therefore, that Commander Bellairs' false and unwarrantable statement had widespread results.

Mr. H. W. Wilson refers in his book [1] to this incident and concludes with the words "Yet once more a great chance offered". Mr. Wilson does not here connect this signal with the turn away, but he does misquote the times somewhat, thus emphasizing the alleged delay. The time of origin of Beatty's signal was 7.50, not 7.45 as stated by Mr. Wilson; it could not have reached Jellicoe himself until about 8 p.m. Yet the Commander-in-Chief's order to the *King George V* to do what Beatty asked was received by that ship, according

[1] *Battleships in Action*, Vol. II, p. 159.

to her log, at 8.7. pm. It is not clear what "great chance" the author refers to; turning towards the battle-cruisers would only have delayed the van of our battle fleet, which was already closing the enemy more directly than the former.

Mr. Churchill, alluding to this episode, quotes this signal, giving the time as 7.47 instead of 7.50, and comments: "The British battle-cruisers would soon be engaged. Where was the van of our battle fleet? . . ." If, before asking this question, he had taken the trouble to look at the plans of the action published with the *Official History*, or even the *Admiralty Narrative*, he would have observed that at this time the whole of our battle fleet was heading for the enemy.

6

TURNING AWAY FROM TORPEDOES

Mr. Winston Churchill, when discussing the first retreat of the German Fleet, at 6.35 p.m., states: [1] "Jellicoe, threatened by the torpedo stream, turned away according to his long resolved policy. . . ." This is a complete fabrication on Mr. Churchill's part. He sets out to give his arm-chair version of Jutland and, even at this late

[1] *The World Crisis* (1916–1918), p. 152.

date, does not take the trouble to verify essential facts. Jellicoe did *not* turn away from any torpedo attack at 6.35. After the first German retreat, and as soon as he was clear of the perilous wake of the enemy, he, at 6.44 p.m., *closed* the enemy, first 11 degrees and, ten minutes later, by a 45 degree turn, making 56 degrees in all. He thereby brought the battle fleet right across the head of the High Seas Fleet when Scheer blundered back seventeen minutes later.[1]

Much uninstructed criticism has been levelled at Admiral Jellicoe for the one occasion when he countered torpedoes by using the only recognized manœuvre for frustrating such an attack as that made by the Germans on their second retreat at 7.22. This was a manœuvre which had been fully discussed, and concurred in beforehand, by all Flag officers; it was used on a number of occasions by a variety of British and

[1] *Official Despatches*, pp. 459–462.

6.23. Course of Fleet S.E. by E.
6.26. Speed 14 knots.
6.33. Speed 17 knots.
6.44. Course of Fleet S.E.
6.54. Course of Fleet South.
7.5. Alter Course 3 points to starboard.

i.e. between 6.23 and 7.5 the course of the battle fleet was altered 90 degrees *towards* the enemy.

German admirals, not only at Jutland but in other engagements. At Jutland this manœuvre was used by Admirals Sturdee, Evan-Thomas, Burney, Hood, Beatty, and also by von Hipper. In some of these cases the turn away was greater than that used by Jellicoe. No one had evolved an alternative. Let us suppose for one moment that the battle fleet had not turned away for a few minutes to avoid these torpedoes. What would the result have been ? If no alteration had been made in the course it is reasonable to suppose, judging by all peace-time practices, that several ships would have been hit and the battle fleet, as a fighting force, considerably reduced in strength.

Another alternative would have been to turn towards and " comb " the torpedoes ; or, in other words, take the risk of being able to see the tracks in time to enable ships to take individual avoiding action. This would have been a risky proceeding in low visibility, in water churned up by the passage of numbers of vessels, making it difficult to see the tracks. And having done so, what next ? Our battle fleet would have been steaming through a smoke-screen in the wake of the retiring enemy fleet, incurring the risk of damage by floating mines, dropped by the Germans for this very purpose, and presenting a most

favourable target for renewed torpedo attacks, especially from a screen of submarines, such as Beatty fully believed he had encountered earlier in the action.

It is easy to be wise after the event and to reply that the tracks of the torpedoes could have been seen; that the enemy did not drop mines and that there were no submarines on the spot. If the carefully considered lessons of peace-time practices are to be totally ignored on the day of battle, of what use are these practices?

In 1920, after the publication of Commander Carlyon Bellairs' book, numerous articles appeared in the Press referring to this phase of the battle, and Admiral Jellicoe was accused of breaking off the action when it might have been successfully continued.

The following few extracts will indicate how persistently, and ignorantly, that author criticizes Jellicoe in this respect: [1]

"It was to avoid this attack of eleven destroyers that twenty-seven battleships turned away. . . . It is impossible to imagine a more definite break from the whole spirit of naval tradition. . . ."

And again: [2]

[1] *The Battle of Jutland*, p. 187.
[2] Ibid., p. 41.

". . . decisive victory is impossible in the misty North Sea if a fleet turns away from a destroyer attack, for such a movement involves losing sight of the enemy fleet and throwing away our gunnery supremacy . . . turning away in the North Sea must be ruled out as Beatty ruled it out when he succeeded to the Command of the Grand Fleet."

This is incorrect: Beatty himself employed identically the same tactics at the Dogger Bank and twice during the Battle of Jutland, with the difference that on two occasions he wrongly turned away from the reported position of a submarine instead of turning towards it to prevent it firing torpedoes.[1]

Jellicoe, and the other Admirals referred to above, turned away from torpedoes which had actually been fired at them at long range by destroyers, and Jellicoe rightly turned *towards* the position of a submarine (which proved to be a myth) reported, shortly before 7 p.m., as having been sighted by one of the ships ahead during the heat of the action.

Mr. Churchill, when referring to the massed torpedo attacks at about 7.20 p.m., says: [2]

"Once more Jellicoe, obedient to his

[1] Vide Chapter II, p. 32.
[2] *The World Crisis* (1916–1918), p. 153.

method, turned away from the torpedo stream, first two points and then two points more. Here at any rate was a moment when it would have been quite easy to divide the British Fleet with the Fifth Battle Squadron leading the starboard division, and so take the enemy between two fires. But the British Commander-in-Chief was absorbed in avoiding the torpedo attack by turning away."

It was not only "his" method which Jellicoe employed to avoid the torpedoes, he used the method proved best by long practice, and agreed with by all his Admirals. The visibility conditions are ignored. It may appear easy, from the study of a diagram prepared with our present knowledge, to divide the fleet in the way suggested. Jellicoe did not have the diagram to guide him! He had no accurate knowledge of the course of the enemy; the mist and smoke prevented him, and others, from visualizing the situation with any accuracy. It would have been the height of folly, and could only have led to complete chaos, to divide the fleet when the visibility was not sufficiently good to enable the detached squadrons to work in co-operation with one another and to co-ordinate their movements according to the movements of the main fleet.

7

THE ESCAPE OF THE GERMAN FLEET AT NIGHT

The fact that Jellicoe had little or no information of the enemy's movements during the night has either been ignored by most of his critics or the scanty information vouchsafed to him has been given undue weight.

The *Admiralty Narrative* states : [1]

" To the Commander-in-Chief the situation may have appeared in a still more favourable light, for he did not know the full extent of the British losses, and was spared any anxiety as to the *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable*. He knew only that *Invincible* had been sunk. . . . For an estimate of the state of, and efficiency of, the German Fleet the Commander-in-Chief could rely on his own observation."

It is correct that Jellicoe did not know the extent of our own losses. Beatty had failed to inform him of the disasters to the battle-cruiser fleet. How, therefore, could he have known, by his own observation, what damage had been done to the enemy ?

Facing page 70 in the Admiralty narrative is a diagram showing the British and German

[1] *Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*, pp. 68, 69.

minefields and the swept channels by which the enemy fleet could enter German protected waters. It is stated that the "general directions" of these channels had been communicated to the Commander-in-Chief. The diagram shows a swept channel running West (true) from Heligoland. Was Jellicoe informed that a channel running in this direction existed, without being told the position of its outer end? Had Jellicoe any reason to suppose that this channel might extend through our own minefields? These are points on which the narrative is silent when it could have been definite.

The *Admiralty Narrative* states: [1]

"At about 10.25 p.m. the head of the German line, by this time well on the port quarter of the British fleet, cut through the line formed by the 9th and 10th Flotillas. . . . These engagements were seen by the battle fleet. . . ."

The implication here is that our whole battle fleet saw firing which indicated the passage of the enemy battle fleet, an altogether unwarrantable assumption. Only some of the battleships saw the firing and only two ships, the *Malaya* and the *Valiant*, identified enemy

[1] *Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*, p. 73.

battleships. The fact that a battleship was identified by the *Malaya* is tucked away in a footnote and no mention is made of the omission to report this to Jellicoe.

Reference is made [1] to an important signal sent from the Admiralty at 10.41 p.m., and also [2] to another important message sent at 1.48 a.m. No mention is, however, made of the time of receipt of these messages in the *Iron Duke*. Again,[3] it is stated that "the Admiralty's 10.41 signal was not received in the *Lion*." In the absence of any explanation being given, there is some justification for doubting the accuracy of this statement. When the *Lion's* wireless was put out of action, another ship in the squadron would, normally, be detailed to receive and pass on messages intended for Beatty. We know that signals from the Admiralty were received in the *New Zealand* and passed to the *Lion* [4] and, unless the signal department in the battle-cruiser squadron was yet again at fault, this signal would also have been received by the *New Zealand*, and passed on.

Commander Carlyon Bellairs, when dealing with the information available to Lord Jellicoe

[1] *Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*, p. 72.
[2] Ibid., p. 74.
[3] Ibid., p. 76.
[4] *Naval Operations*, Vol. III, pp. 413, 415.

during the night, is as inaccurate, and biassed, as he is in other details. He states : [1]

" . . . a message was sent to the Grand Fleet, at 1.52 by wireless, as follows : ' Enemy battleships steering S.E. approximate bearing S.W. My position 10 miles astern of First Battle Squadron.' "

It will be noticed that Commander Bellairs again purports to give the definite wording of a message which, if made, would have been in cipher and, at the time his book was published, should have been known only to those who had access to confidential documents. He also gives the time at which the signal was made, but omits the name of the ship from which it originated. No message containing the words, as quoted, can be traced in the Official list of signals. A message was, however, sent by the *Faulknor*, at 1.52 a.m., which read : " Enemy's battleships in sight. My position 10 miles astern of 1st B.S."

Commander Bellairs then continues : [2]

" Whether the message reporting the course and position of the German fleet at 1.52 was taken in by the Grand Fleet can only be settled by an examination of the signal logs ;

[1] *Battle of Jutland*, p. 221.
[2] Ibid., p. 222.

and in particular the *Iron Duke's* wireless logs should be produced . . . it seems hardly conceivable that the 1.52 message, to which all other signals should have given precedence, from a few miles away was not taken in by a single ship. The difficulty of providing an explanation may possibly be responsible for the allegation that it was logged in the *Iron Duke's* wireless log."

It is not clear what the author implies by this last sentence. At first sight it would appear that the wording should be " was *not* logged in the *Iron Duke's* wireless log " ; but then, why use the word " allegation " ? The impression left on the mind, after reading Commander Bellairs' book, is that he suggests the *Iron Duke's* log is being deliberately withheld, for the purpose of hiding the fact that this signal was received by Jellicoe, but not acted on by him. Such a suggestion, if intended, is merely a further example of the " mischievous and misleading character " [1] of the book. It is now known that this signal was not received in the *Iron Duke* [2] or in any other ship except a destroyer quite close to the *Faulknor*.

When referring to the firing which took

[1] *The Times*, 19 February 1920.

[2] If it had been it would, or should, have been equally received by Beatty, but he makes no allusion to it.

place astern of the battle fleet during the night Commander Bellairs states :[1] "Some of these explosions were seen from the Grand Fleet." No mention is made of the fact that only a few ships saw anything definite enough to report, and that this information was not passed to Jellicoe.

Having weighed all the evidence, most of which is founded on speculation and conjecture, Commander Bellairs sums up the situation thus :[2]

"We have now seen that the failure to destroy the enemy was due neither to lack of information nor to any other cause such as low visibility, or mist, but to the deliberate steps taken by Lord Jellicoe, all of which had as their one controlling thought the preservation of his own ships."

Could criticism be more unscrupulous ?

Mr. H. W. Wilson states :[3]

". . . had he (Jellicoe) given his fleet a rendezvous for Horns Reef and vigorously attacked there at dawn, it is morally certain that a great victory would have been achieved. . . . But any real doubt as to the whereabouts of Scheer should have been removed

[1] *Battle of Jutland*, p. 220.
[2] Ibid., p. 223.
[3] *Battleships in Action*, Vol. II, pp. 164, 165.

by the noise and flash of fighting noted soon after 10 by various battleships."

It is easy to be wise after the event and to make suggestions with the knowledge available some years later. There would have been an outcry, and justifiably so, if Jellicoe had staked his all on the enemy fleet returning by Horns Reef, and had taken no steps to safeguard other approaches. Jellicoe had no reason to know that the Horns Reef Passage had been, or would be, selected by Scheer. As for the doubts being dispersed by the firing heard, soon after 10 p.m., it was not only Jellicoe who misinterpreted the meaning of this—as has been stated before. Such information as was received by Jellicoe during the night was also available to Beatty. Both Admirals made similar appreciations of the situation. It is sometimes forgotten, too, that there were no less than eleven other Admirals of experience present, and not one of them came to any different conclusion or made any better use of the scanty information available.

When referring to the *Castor's* action, at about 10 p.m., Mr. H. W. Wilson states : [1]

" Many opportunities of using the torpedo were lost because the British destroyers were ignorant of the German whereabouts and

[1] *Battleships in Action*, Vol. II, p. 165.

took the approaching vessels for friends, thus deliberately refraining from discharging torpedoes and losing good opportunities."

The author ignores the fact, clearly stated in the published report from the *Castor*, that the element of doubt in the minds of the Captains of the destroyers, on this occasion, was caused by the enemy ships making our secret challenge. An explanation of the possible cause of this challenge being known to the Germans has been given on page 119.

To quote one more extract, which is a good example of Commander Bellairs' obvious intention to show that Jellicoe could do no right under any circumstances: he states: [1]

"In regard to the big ships, Lord Jellicoe says that the Germans exaggerated our losses by one battleship and one armoured cruiser, but he omits to comment on his own list of German losses."

The author then gives Jellicoe's list of estimated German losses as 3 battleships (certain) and 1 battleship or battle-cruiser and 1 battleship (probable); a total of 5 capital ships, of which 2 were "probable". He continues:

"Here was exaggeration indeed, given, of

[1] *The Battle of Jutland*, pp. 235, 236.

course, in good faith. Still, it is an exaggeration natural to one who builds pictures rather than concentrates all his energies on obtaining decisive results. . . ."

If, in Commander Bellairs' opinion, this over-estimation of the German losses is any evidence that Jellicoe is one who " builds pictures rather than concentrates all his energies on obtaining decisive results ", what fate would Beatty suffer at the hands of this critic if he was dealt with on the same lines as Jellicoe? In his despatch Beatty (again, of course, in all good faith) estimates the German losses at 6 capital ships sunk, and 2 seriously damaged; as against Jellicoe's, more modest, estimate of 5 capital ships of which 2 were " probable ".

Mr. Churchill [1] uses many arguments to show that Jellicoe ought to have realized that the Horns Reef Channel was the most likely one for Scheer to select for his final retreat. There is a good deal in the conclusions he draws, on the evidence he gives, but—and it is a big *but*—he omits to mention that Jellicoe had good reason to suppose there were two channels running towards Heligoland which must be considered. The author says: [2] " The Horns Reef Channel and the Heligoland

[1] *The World Crisis* (1916–1918). [2] Ibid., pp. 156–7.

Channel . . . were not far apart. . . ." True; the entrance of the channel running in a north-westerly direction from Heligoland was not far from the Horns Reef Channel; but the one running west (true) from Heligoland was some distance to the southward, and Jellicoe could not ignore the possible existence of this channel, or of the route by the Ems.

Again he states: [1] "Scheer was left free to retreat by the Horns Reef. . . ." This is inaccurate: our destroyer flotillas stationed astern of the battle fleet acted as a check to this passage, and events proved that Scheer's retreat was by no means "left free". Not only was his fleet continually attacked by the British flotillas, but it was actually sighted by ships of the Fifth Battle Squadron; no report of this was, however, made to Jellicoe, but the author ignores this omission.

Mr. Churchill criticizes Jellicoe for his appreciation of the situation made on the meagre information he received during the early hours of the night; it would be equitable if he had mentioned that a similar appreciation was made by Beatty, who had the same information, and no better one by any Flag Officer present.

In summing up the action Mr. Churchill,

[1] *The World Crisis* (1916–1918), p. 157.

after saying[1] "The British Battle Fleet was never seriously in action", draws attention to the small damage received by our battleships; he omits the considerable material damage done to the enemy *by* the fire of our battleships.

A large volume could be written on the misconceptions and misrepresentations of these, and less important, writers who have presumed to express views on a matter which they have prejudged and only vaguely understand; but it would weary the unprofessional reader. The public, as a whole, wants a clear-cut verdict on Jutland. This they will find in the concluding chapter.

There only remains one aspect of the subject to be dealt with in this chapter. Assertions have been made that if the German battle fleet had been annihilated at Jutland the war would have ended there and then; or, in any case, it would have prevented intensive submarine warfare against our commerce. In the first place, no British Admiral has ever succeeded in annihilating an enemy fleet; and in the second place, although the material damage inflicted on the enemy at Trafalgar was very considerably greater, proportionately, than at Jutland, this very definite victory did not prevent the French from

[1] *The World Crisis* (1916–1918), p. 161.

harassing our trade for the next ten years. What frigates and privateers could accomplish during that period, submarines would have accomplished in our day.

CHAPTER XI

THE VERDICT

WAS Jutland a British victory? This is a question which is frequently asked, and before a verdict can be given it is essential to be clear as to what is meant by "victory".

The material losses were:

	British.	German.
Battleships	0	1
Battle-Cruisers	3	1
Cruisers	3	4
Destroyers	8	5
Total	14	11

The casualties in personnel were:

	British.	German.
Killed	6,097	2,551 [1]
Wounded	510	507 [1]

The heaviest British losses occurred during the first phase in the engagement with the German battle-cruisers and just prior to the actual clash of contact between the main fleets, when the *Invincible* and our armoured

[1] German Official History.

cruisers found themselves, without warning, under the concentrated fire of the enemy's battle-cruisers and leading battleships.

With regard to the battle-cruiser action, which was in the nature of a distinct and separate encounter, we must admit that the Germans have considerable justification in claiming a victory. What are the facts ?

Beatty had under his immediate control a fleet of considerably greater power than that under von Hipper. Taking capital ships alone, the British force consisted of 4 battleships and 6 battle-cruisers as compared with the German one of 5 battle-cruisers, a majority of two to one in our favour.

In this duel we lost 2 battle-cruisers and 2 destroyers as against the enemy's loss of 2 destroyers; moreover, our surviving battle-cruisers had received more damage than they had inflicted. The enemy had made no attempt to avoid action; von Hipper's tactics were entirely sound and the fighting efficiency of his command proved to be of a high order. We can only acknowledge frankly, that the first " round " went definitely in the enemy's favour.

The final verdict in any match does not, however, depend on the result of the opening rounds. Let us recapitulate the succeeding stages of this great contest.

When the main action was joined and Jellicoe had assumed control, we again had the stronger fleet, but the proportion in capital ships in our favour was not now two to one, but about seven to five. From then on, including the phase already alluded to when contact was being made, the British losses were 1 battle-cruiser, 3 cruisers and 6 destroyers, as compared with the enemy's of 1 battleship, 1 battle-cruiser, 4 cruisers and 3 destroyers.

The German fleet received far more damage than it inflicted, both in actual losses and in hits on surviving ships. Scheer's tactics were chiefly devoted to extricating his command from situations in which he was threatened with annihilation. This, to give him his due, he achieved with considerable ability ; but he was like a boxer, knowing himself to be outmatched and outfought, who concentrates his wits on avoiding punishment, while he waits anxiously for the call of " time ". The " call " came at length when darkness gave him a much-needed respite. It was not the real end ; his opponent remained, fit and ready to meet him, only anxious for a fight to a finish when daylight should clear the arena again : but Scheer had had enough. He declined and successfully evaded further combat by working his way

home under cover of the night, as the pugilist who has lost heart and knows himself defeated "throws up the sponge" and leaves the ring, never again to challenge his victorious adversary.

To Jellicoe, therefore, must go the verdict of that impartial referee—accurate history.

As the misconceptions and misrepresentations which have surrounded the facts about Jutland are gradually, and we hope now finally, cleared away, and the success, which was attained on the day when the whole issue of the Great War hung in the balance, is more generally recognized, credit will be given where credit is due.

APPENDIX

ORGANIZATION OF THE BRITISH FLEET ON LEAVING HARBOUR ON 30TH MAY 1916

BATTLE FLEET

Iron Duke (Fleet Flagship).

Organization No. 2. *Organization No. 5.*

Second Battle Squadron.

1st Division.

- King George V, Ajax, Centurion, Erin — 1st Division.
- Orion, Monarch, Conqueror, Thunderer — 2nd Division.

Fourth Battle Squadron.

2nd Division.

- Iron Duke, Royal Oak, Superb, Canada — 3rd Division.
- Benbow, Bellerophon, Temeraire, Vanguard — 4th Division.

First Battle Squadron.

3rd Division.

6th Division.
- Marlborough
- Revenge
- Hercules
- Agincourt

5th Division.
- Colossus
- Collingwood
- Neptune
- St. Vincent

Attached Light Cruisers
- Boadicea
- Bellona
- Blanche
- Active

Attached
- Oak (Destroyer)
- Abdiel (Minelayer)

BATTLE-CRUISERS

Third Battle-Cruiser Squadron.

Invincible
Inflexible
Indomitable

CRUISERS

First Cruiser Squadron.	*Second Cruiser Squadron.*
Defence	Minotaur
Warrior	Hampshire
Duke of Edinburgh	Cochrane
Black Prince	Shannon

Light Cruisers

Fourth Light Cruiser Squadron.

Calliope
Constance
Caroline
Royalist
Comus

Light Cruiser: Canterbury

Destroyer Flotillas

Twelfth Flotilla.	*Eleventh Flotilla.*	*Fourth Flotilla.*
Faulknor	Castor	Tipperary
Marksman	Kempenfelt	Broke
Obedient	Ossory	Achates
Maenad	Mystic	Porpoise
Opal	Moon	Spitfire
Mary Rose	Morning Star	Unity
Marvel	Magic	Garland
Menace	Mounsey	Ambuscade
Nessus	Mandate	Ardent
Narwhal	Marne	Fortune
Mindful	Minion	Sparrowhawk
Onslaught	Manners	Contest
Munster	Michael	Shark
Nonsuch	Mons	Acasta
Noble	Martial	Ophelia
Mischief	Milbrook	Christopher
		Owl
		Hardy
		Midge

BATTLE-CRUISER FLEET

Battle-Cruisers

Lion (Fleet Flagship).

First Battle-Cruiser Squadron.	*Second Battle-Cruiser Squadron.*
Princess Royal	New Zealand
Queen Mary	Indefatigable
Tiger	

Fifth Battle Squadron.

Barham
Valiant
Warspite
Malaya

Light Cruisers

First Light Cruiser Squadron.	*Second Light Cruiser Squadron.*	*Third Light Cruiser Squadron.*
Galatea	Southampton	Falmouth
Phaeton	Birmingham	Yarmouth
Inconstant	Nottingham	Birkenhead
Cordelia	Dublin	Gloucester
		Chester

Destroyer Flotillas

First Flotilla.	*Thirteenth Flotilla.*	*Ninth and Tenth Flotillas.*
Fearless	Champion	Lydiard
Acheron	Nestor	Liberty
Ariel	Nomad	Landrail
Attack	Narborough	Laurel
Hydra	Obdurate	Moorsom
Badger	Petard	Morris
Goshawk	Pelican	Turbulent
Defender	Nerissa	Termagant
Lizard	Onslow	
Lapwing	Moresby	
	Nicator	

Seaplane Carrier: Engadine

ORGANIZATION OF THE HIGH SEAS FLEET ON 31st MAY 1916

Battleships

Third Squadron.

- König, Grosser Kurfürst, Kronprinz, Markgraf — 5th Division.
- Kaiser, Kaiserin, Prinzregent Luitpold — 6th Division.

First Squadron.

- Friedrich der Grosse (Fleet Flagship), Ostfriesland, Thuringen, Helgoland, Oldenburg — 1st Division.
- Posen, Rheinland, Nassau, Westfalen — 2nd Division.

Second Squadron.

- Deutschland, Hessen, Pommern — 3rd Division.
- Hanover, Schlesien, Schleswig Holstein — 4th Division.

Cruisers

First Scouting Group. (Battle-Cruisers.)	*Second Scouting Group.* (Light Cruisers.)	*Fourth Scouting Group.* (Light Cruisers.)
Lützow	Frankfurt	Stettin
Derfflinger	Wiesbaden	München
Seydlitz	Pillau	Hamburg
Moltke	Elbing	Frauenlob
Von der Tann		Stuttgart

Destroyer Flotillas

Rostock, Light Cruiser, First Leader of Torpedo Boats.	Regensburg, Light Cruiser, Second Leader of Torpedo Boats.
First Flotilla (1st half)	Second Flotilla
Third Flotilla	Sixth Flotilla
Fifth Flotilla	Ninth Flotilla
Seventh Flotilla	

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